TSR's BROM! TOM LYLE! ROGER STERN!

ARENA

MAG E

No. 8
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Al Gordon & Jerry Ordway Talk About WILDSTAR™

ORDWAY & GORDON

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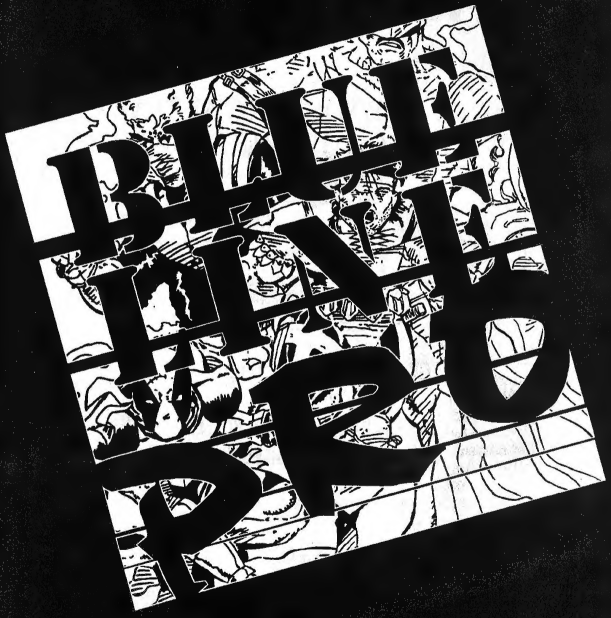

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Jerry Ordway pencils and Al Gordon inks their rendition of *WildStar*, their creation from Image Comics.

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Editorial

I've returned... yet again. Y'know, I attended the Malibu Ultraverse Conference in Los Angeles this past February (all expenses paid by Malibu... Thank You) and I must say I thoroughly enjoyed myself. Malibu's staff was very proficient and excited about the new projects in store and Scott Rosenberg, co-owner of Malibu Comics (enter, other co-owner, Bob Jacob), commented to me that "we never suspected that things would go this smoothly."

But, you can read more about that in my Ultraverse article this very issue (plug, plug).

What I want to talk about is something that really impressed me, however, in retrospect I suppose it should have been expected. All the Comic Media people in attendance convened together... cliques were formed (in actuality I shouldn't say "all" for this was a motley assortment that Don Thompson declined to attend). This was much to Malibu's and several other people's chagrin for as you may or may not know, us Media people were the "class clowns" and troublemakers when you were in school...

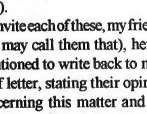
Ah, so now you remember me!

Anyhow, it began as Maureen McTigue of *Comics Scene* and myself found one another in the very beginnings and sat together "because we didn't know too many other people." Throughout the day, eventually we were joined by Steve Thomas and Neil Hansen of *Comics Values Monthly*, Ian Feller of *Comic Book Collector*, Dez Skinn of *Comics International*, Phil Nutman of *Comic Book Week* and even Drew Harris of *Wizard Magazine*. For the duration of the conference, although we did meet "other people," our group was rather closely-knit, although Neil incessantly cautioned that each of us should "watch our backs!"

What I discovered in these few short days is that we who must live, breathe and eat comics (I find that *FemForce* and *Silver Sable* are of the better tasting books for some reason), each in turn views the other as nothing but "friendly rivals" (a regard shared by Ed Polgardy of the newly formed *Comic Talk* with whom I met with in New York this past January). We talked, laughed, drank, ate (food, not comics) and commented on how there is no need for animosity in comics between us "press people". With the way this industry is crazily expanding, there's room for all of us. And, as it should be, the readers benefit (with the exception that I still have major problems with one *certain* magazine).

I invite each of these, my friends (if I may call them that), herein mentioned to write back to me a brief letter, stating their opinion concerning this matter and I'm going to run those letters in future installments of "Thrown to the Lions". It's an event you won't want to miss and you'll read it right here.

Let's see what happens, shall we?



Joe Martin

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by Dwayne Haddix, Dan Lauer and Chris Leidenfrost

Dylan "Race" Danger has made a name for himself in the Nascar circuit and life seems good until the sudden death of a loved one reveals secrets he never suspected. High action, race cars, espionage and ninjas overbound in this suspense-filled adventure story that you won't want to miss!

SHIPS IN JUNE

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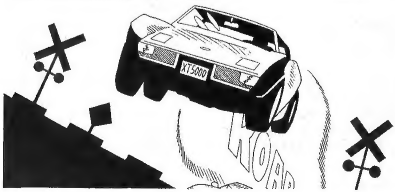

SKY COMICS

Thrown To The Lions!

CORRESPONDENCE & ADVICE

Salutations! And welcome to another sharp-witted edition of Arena Magazine's *forum*, "Thrown To The Lions!" This is your sounding board and we know you have lots to say so write and address your comments to: "Thrown To The Lions", c/o *Arena Magazine*, 264 Main Street, Florence, KY 41042.

Dear Joe:

First, I'd like to congratulate you on your endeavors and say that I really enjoy your magazine and I actually find it to be a very entertaining read. I have issues #2 through #6 and I've read them all from front to back. I like the new idea of putting the letters in the front of the book after the editorial (that has always made more sense to me) and I hope you continue doing this. By the way tell Jerry Smith "good job!" on putting Scott Kincaid in his place. Talk about picky. If Mike Baron likes *Arena* then that's enough for me.

The Val Semeiks interview was rather enjoyable. I had no idea that he pencilled all those issues of *Conan*. This may sound weird but lots of people write in interviews of people they'd like to see, but here's who I'd rather you didn't interview: Rob Liefeld (a founding forefather of fan-boyism) and Cam Kennedy (who nearly destroyed the *Star Wars* mythos for me). I would say Todd McFarlane (a true ****face) but I enjoy *Spawn* too damn much!

Well, I don't want to write too much. Just thought I'd let you know that *Arena* is very good and even though your format changes are confusing, I'll stick with it until Liefeld does the cover (just kidding!). Keep up the great work.

Jarrod Hennessey
Bayonet Point, FL

Hey, Jarrod, you're not the only guy out there with anti-Liefeld sentiments. I've met more than a couple but if there's one thing I believe is that everyone deserves a fair shake. Liefeld's luck may run better than most of ours but he's also done it himself. That's important. And I think he's opened a lot of doors for comics and companies that are not the "Big Two", which no longer exists. In the long run, Liefeld's done good by me.

Anyway, I'm glad you like us, and thanks for reading. If you've seen ***Arena*** *#7, our format is pretty nailed down now. Let us know what you think.*

Dear *Arena Magazine*,

I've read Boneyard Press' *Young Jeffrey Dahmer* comic and it left a bad taste in my mouth to say the least. Jerry Smith was very kind in his criticism if you ask me. That's exactly what Boneyard is about is "packaging fiction about a deranged killer for a buck." They're relying on controversy and using a maniac's name to sell their product. There's no way they could sell an issue otherwise. And they also put out a book called *Rectum Errectum* which is even worse! What a bunch of jerks! I'll also add that I didn't pay for these books, they were given to me.

But *Arena's* a good mag. Otherwise I wouldn't waste my time writing to you guys. Peace.

Tony Papadakis
Chicago, IL

Well, that certainly was interesting. This is one of the first letters we've received with such emotional context, Tony, and I apologize for cutting out a bit of it. I hope we got everything right. Some of it was a little difficult to read. But, uh, I'm glad you like us. Maybe you should write to Boneyard and voice your opinion to them, also (if you haven't already).

Arena:

I won't waste your time with meaningless drivel but get straight to the point. Your Gaming News is pretty measley in comparison to your Comic News. I can only theorize that gaming news is much harder to come by since these companies which you garner your news from comes from the manufacturers in the form of press releases and what not. If you're going to cover role playing, then perhaps you should get a bit more involved with the gaming companies or just leave that job to the more experienced guys like *Dragon, Dungeon* and *White Wolf Magazine*. Truth told, you don't need a gaming section, although I do quite enjoy your Gaming Fool's reviews. Perhaps you could endow Tony Parsons with a more comic-related writing job such as reviewing, or tearing apart, a solitary comic in each issue and entitle him Captain Criticism, the Evaluator or some other such cognomen. I think that would do rather well. However, I enjoy most of the rest of your magazine and will continue purchasing it.

To leave on a good note, *Arena* seems to have a "voice". I like the magazine because it has personality and a certain lighthearted, friendly character that most other publications of its kind seem to lack. Overall, a good job, but consider losing the Gaming Section.

Sidney Penn, Jr.
Little Rock, AR

Thanks, Sidney, and you're

*not the first to point out that **Arena** has a "voice". Several others have commented that the Magazine seems very amicable. I'm not exactly sure why, but whatever we're doing, expect that it will continue.*

As far as dropping the Gaming Section, we'll take it under advisement. We consider all our criticisms very seriously. What do the rest of you think?

Hey, Guys;

Well, as I promised, here's a critique of your new format by both David (Dorman) and I. All the comments I note here are things we agreed would improve the magazine. It's clear you guys are working very hard to make this a successful magazine, and we're really anxious to see you work out all the kinks. So, here goes:

1) Most importantly, you should lose the double thin line boxing around every page. It may work great in *Rolling Stone*, but that's because they're tabloid size. You're working in comic book size, which is significantly smaller, and the boxing only serves to make the mag seem more claustrophobic. We suggest you save this technique for special or specific features only. Wherever you choose to use it, keep it consistent.

2) Get rid of the boxed header title on every feature. It's okay on a few of the regular pieces, like Comic News, but center it top or bottom, and don't use it on any pages where the whole page is boxed. It's just too much.

3) We noticed a couple places where you inserted full page ads in the middle of a feature. That's not a good way to ensure reader flow, and can be confusing if it looks like a comic cover, readers may interpret it to be an illo of someone's upcoming work. Keep full page ads between features not inside them.

4) Comic News: Avoid stacking this logo, it just wastes space. Also, you might want to stick with a blockier script style font for headlines. Perhaps use a small lightning bolt as bullets for news items or to bracket company names. You should run the news flashes in single column only. It's too confusing when you run 2 columns next to a single column, and it looks choppy. Stay away from using '*' as a bullet.

5) Watch out for crowding. With so much 'boxing' going on, your columns, text and features are looking jammed together. Space everything with consistent sized gutters.

6) Previews: Reduce the height of the Previews banner. Enlarge the title of the book you're previewing, it should be as easily recognizable as the art.

7) Omit the page number where it intrudes on page art or copy.

8) Industry News: Should be grouped with the Comic News, not a whole magazine apart. The stacking of the title works well with the graphic here.

David and I agreed on a couple of positive changes you've made:

1) The contents page works good and information on the cover is a nice touch.

2) The letters page header, type and logo is really good.

3) Your editorial page works good as it stands (boxing is fine).

4) The title header on every page of the interview works well and helps distinguish that feature.

5) Love that logo!

Well, guys, hope this helps your design next issue. I'm having my design editor friend go over it as well, and I'll send along any additional comments he has to make.

Thanks again for allowing us to make suggestions. We really want to see your venture take off.

Talk to you all soon!

Lurene Haines
Ft. Walton Beach, FL

*Here's a peek in the back door at **Arena**. Lurene and Dave have been a vital part of the goings on behind our magazine and as we are always striving to improve, our publisher invites them to always critique our book and to never hold back, or as he says, "Tear it apart!"*

We highly respect your guys' design sense and thank you for your honest opinions! Sorry about the bit of chopping we had to do to your letter, Lurene, but hopefully we included enough for everybody to get the gist of it.

*Now, far from a critique, here's a letter from some people who not only enjoy **Arena**, it actually gets them 'hot and bothered"!*

Dear *Arena*:

Since the first issue of your magazine, you have lured us into the comic news world, a world we have never ventured. We desire the suspense to read your next long interview, which is always filled with hard core facts and information (we love it when you have multiple artists!). The artwork blows us out of our minds. The format is wonderful, the way each page is laid out thrills us to no end. We scream for more! More "tips and ads", please. Our pleasure peaks with every issue.

Please don't stop,

Tracy & Amie
Frankfort, KY

Thank you, oh so much! We live to serve.

NEXT: Joe Quesada thrills us by being our main feature in AM #9 with an excellent Wolverine piece as our cover star! Also, look for your Tribe #1 Trading Card from IMAGE Comics. Tribe #2 is in Arena #10! Be there!!

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Art: Address all submissions to Arena Magazine, 264 Main Street, Florence, Kentucky, 41042. Send good copies of stats please. Put your name and address on the back of each piece of art. Always include an S.A.S.E. if you wish your materials returned.

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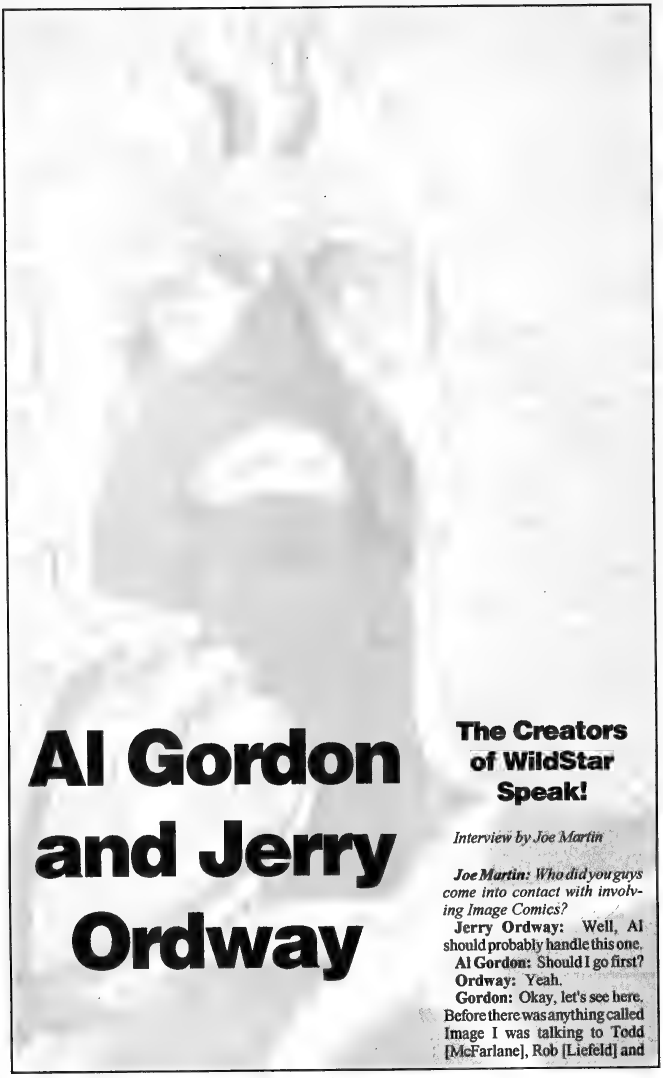

Al Gordon and Jerry Ordway

The Creators of WildStar Speak!

Interview by Joe Martin

Joe Martin: *Who did you guys come into contact with involving Image Comics?*

Jerry Ordway: Well, Al should probably handle this one.

Al Gordon: Should I go first?

Ordway: Yeah.

Gordon: Okay, let's see here. Before there was anything called Image I was talking to Todd [McFarlane], Rob [Liefeld] and

definitely Erik [Larsen] about this, a year and a half ago, and they were really jazzed by the idea of self-publishing but, at the time, it wasn't financially feasible for me. I'd been working on titles like *Justice League* and *Legion* that did okay but the royalties were nothing like *Spider-Man* or the X-titles so I was kind of keeping my distance. Erik kept trying to get me involved and finally I succumbed.

Ordway: Mention to them that Erik used to be in a studio with you.

Gordon: Why don't I mention that Erik and I used to be in a studio together. For a time we had a studio with Steve Leialoha, Chris (*Spider-Man*) Marrinan and Pete McDonnell.

JM: *In San Francisco?*

Gordon: Yeah. You're kind of far away.

JM: *Yeah, we're near Cincinnati.*

Gordon: No, I meant your voice is far away.

Ordway: [Laughter]

JM: *[Laughter] Yeah, I'm in Cincinnati!*

Gordon: Oh, okay.

JM: *I'll speak real loud!*

Gordon: Okay! [Laughs] Anyway, the guy who really made the jump, of course, was Rob. He made a deal with Malibu to publish the first issue of Youngblood and when that started looking really good, and it seemed as if there weren't that many obstacles to get through, a deal was cut for the remaining "Marvel-Less Seven." At that point, Erik was trying to get me to go in and I was, well...

JM: *Still very apprehensive?*

Gordon: Chicken. That's the word. There are so many things that you have to be responsible for. I had no idea that just trafficking this thing would be such an incredible headache. You're responsible for doing everything.

JM: *Basically, you're your own company.*

Ordway: Each person and each project is its own company.

Gordon: Right. I'm talking to my colorist making sure he's going to be here on Monday because I've got to get him pages, my letterer is calling asking about this and that, I talk to Image about where we're going to be placing ads and I'm talking to Jerry saying, "What about this? What about that?" You get to work at 8 a.m. and it's noon and you haven't done any actual work because you've been on the phone all morning. Incredible.

JM: *A lot of coordination going on there.*

Gordon: I'm a heck of a coordinated guy. That's why we don't let Jerry do it.

Ordway: Har, har.

JM: *How did WildStar originate?*

Gordon: I think that when you first get into comics that you have a dream to do your

own stuff at some point. I came out of the *Timber Wolf* project [for DC Comics] in which I pretty much created everybody. I re-invented Timber Wolf and Joe [Phillips] and I designed all the costumes together but, basically, we started from scratch. Everything in the series is new. You begin to realize, "Hey, I just did all this work, I set up an entire universe, and did it for a page rate."

JM: *Right.*

Gordon: You start to feel kind of funny about it when you realize you've done all this great work and you don't own it. That you're just going to...

JM: *That it's just going to go on without you and you're not going to have anything to do with it?*

Gordon: Well, yeah. It's nothing against the company, you see. It's up to their discretion whether or not they're going to publish it at all. They could just sit on it. All the decisions are company decisions and you are really just a "cog."

JM: *And it's just a bunch of strangers manhandling your work from your viewpoint?*

Gordon: Well, fortunately, I like all the people I've worked with at DC except for one person [chuckle].

Ordway: For the most part, we have control over the stuff we come up with ourselves.

Gordon: It depends on how much they trust you.

Ordway: You have creative control to a degree depending on your editor, but you have no control as far as business decisions and such.

Gordon: No marketing, no promotion, no nothing, in fact, and I suppose that's the problem a lot of creators have with the companies. For instance, with *Timber Wolf* I was trying to create something that was essentially a Marvel comic book. I'm not proud. DC created Timber Wolf before Wolverine. Ba-

sically, Marvel took the ball and ran with it and created what is now one of the top-selling characters of all time in comics. The character was invented by DC, but they didn't promote it.

But, getting back to the actual question, "Where did WildStar come from?"

The concept is really years-old. Part of the idea for the character goes all the way back to grammar school for me, but the name was kind of an accident. I was co-plotting *Legion [of Superheroes]* at the time and I kept getting two of the character's names mixed up while I was talking to Keith [Giffen]. There was a guy called Wildfire and a guy called Starlord and I kept saying, "Well, WildStar..." And he would go, "Who?"

"Oh, I mean Wildfire!"

JM: Or Starlord.

Gordon: Yeah! One of them guys. So, the name was an accident. Keith kept saying, "That's kind of a cool name. You should do something with that." And I thought, "Actually, this fits this concept I've had for years." Then, Jerry and I got together and made it even more complicated and convoluted [laughs].

But this is a wonderful opportunity. Your adrenaline is just pumping.

JM: *It feels like you're making your future.*

Gordon: Well, you are.

JM: So, who is WildStar?

Gordon: Jer?

Ordway: [Laughs]

JM: *Let's let Jerry talk for a while.*

Ordway: [Laughs]

JM: *Jerry?*

Gordon: Jerry?

Ordway: [Yawns] Uh, who is this? [Laughs] Who is WildStar?

Gordon: [Laughs]

JM: *Maybe he's not sure.*

Gordon: Well, I'll say this...

Ordway: Why don't you an-

HE'S GONE BALLISTIC. I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM LIKE THIS. HEY, WHAT'S HE--?
WILDSTAR, GOOD GOD DON'T--
JUST BECAUSE IT'S BEEN LIVING THERE FOR YEARS...DOESN'T MEAN IT'S YOUR FACE.

swer 'What is WildStar'?

JM: By the way, did we get that right? WildStar with a big 'W' and a big 'S'?

Gordon: Yeah, you did! You guessed right. In fact, almost everyone's been guessing it right. But really, I never expected anybody to notice that. I thought they would look at it and go, "Oh, it's a misprint, it must be two words," or that somebody did an accidental capital 'S' and it's really one word.

JM: Cool. Sorry, didn't meant to interrupt.

Gordon: Anyway, there's three or four WildStars depending on how you look at it. There's the actual human character that the book is about, the symbiote-parasite that lives on the character is the WildStar also, and the human counterpart is named after the symbiote which is actually named after a legend which we're not really sure about. Well, I am and Jerry knows, but the audience doesn't know if the legend is a sort of god or goddess or something else or maybe it was an omen about this war. So, there's actually three or four WildStars.

But, the book is about this character and his little pet... fish.

JM: The symbiote and the man.

Ordway: It's a "tick-alien."

Gordon: [Laughs]

JM: A tick. That's actually a good way of putting it.

Gordon: Oh, yeah, he's [the symbiote-parasite] quite stuck to him [the man]. They're definitely an integral part of each other.

JM: In one scene, he actually rips one from another guy's face.

Gordon: They're living off of each other, definitely attached.

Ordway: The symbiote is sort of a kind of life-support thing.

JM: So, how did the main character's relationship with this parasite come about?

Gordon: Hmmm, let's see, what can I tell you? Uh, there's a bunch of back stories that I wish I could put out in a leaflet or something and get right to the story but as it turns out we're sort of trickling a bit of the back information out in each issue.

JM: Makes for good storytelling.

Gordon: Well, it's the most difficult part, doing all the exposition, but basically in the war in the future, the "badguys" all have these different kinds of symbiotes stuck to them. These are the "nasty, dirty, ugly guys" but, uh, not that WildStar is not "nasty, dirty, ugly" because he certainly has that potential.

JM: The anti-hero hero.

Gordon: Yeah.

Ordway: The "badguys" are actually the equivalent of soldiers. What you see as a "goodguy" or "badguy" is dependent on which side you're on. If you look at Captain America from the perspective of the Nazis, then he's the "badguy," you know? The play here is depending on where you're standing. If you look at our book from a different perspective, the "badguy" could be

WildStar.

JM: *But that DeadStar character looks mighty ugly, though.*

Gordon: [Laughs] Well, yeah. That's what happens when your mom names you DeadStar.

But most of the characters that you see in the *WildStar* book have these symbiotes and the way we've set it up is sort of like warring factions. Basically, it's two corporations and it doesn't matter who they are. It's not a national situation, it's a world situation where the corporations are running the game. Sort of like real life, I guess.

Anyway, there's been an alien alliance on Earth since 1947. It's based on what I believe a UFOlogist would consider an actual fact. A flying saucer supposedly crash landed in the desert in New Mexico.

Ordway: Roswell.

Gordon: Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947 and in the real world there was actually a press release that stated the Air Force had found what they believed to be "a craft of alien origin." The next day, this was before TV, on the newsreels that they had at the time, they said, "Oh, it was just a mistake. Never mind."

Ordway: The military rescinded their official press statement. What we're telling you, by the way, is an actual true story. This isn't made up.

Gordon: *WildStar* is based on the fact that this actually did happen. There's actually a newsreel where one of the generals that was involved with the original project was being interviewed by a reporter and he definitely says that, "This craft is of extraterrestrial origin and we even have the dead alien occupants."

Ordway: Obviously, the trick though is that people can actually write and print anything. Al, when were you abducted?

Gordon: Well, it was just that one time.

Ordway: And then, only for lunch.

Gordon: [Laughs] Yeah, nouvelle cuisine. It was funny because they all looked like Elvis. It scared the $#!+ out of me.

JM: *[Laughs] But they had the big, black eyes, right?*

Ordway: Right, and they covered them up by wearing sunglasses.

Gordon: And they all kept saying, "Thank ya'. Thank ya', baby." And finally there was this booming voice that said, "Al has left the flying saucer!"

JM: *"You can come out, kids, he's gone, now."*

Gordon: [Laughs] Take all that stuff out because nobody's going to get it -- too much inflection.

Anyway, in the story, there was this war that was started by another alien race that had come to Earth after the first aliens had made this friendly alliance with the U.S., and had been here for a while. There were certain offers made to certain corporations and, skipping all the details, it escalated into a war.

JM: *The world turns corporate.*

Ordway: Yeah, well, I think we'd all agree that it's going to anyway. What with Europe trying to come up with a "one world currency" and I don't think that's a surprise to anybody.

WE'RE ALIKE, YOU AND ME...
KERPOW!!
MAYBE THAT'S WHY WE CAN'T STAND EACH OTHER!
"HASTA LA VISTA, BABY."
FIZZLE
WHAT THE...
FIZZLE POP CRACKLE
AW, CRIPES! I'VE HAD IT WITH YOU, YOU LITTLE PISSER!

We've [United States] had interest in practically every country and our corporations like General Motors, for example, and any of these companies that are multi-national are perfect patterns for what we're doing. Not that General Motors has entered into any kind of pact with aliens or anything.

JM: *[Uneasy laughter] Do you know something that we don't, Jerry?*

Gordon: In this story, as far as that goes, it would probably be the U.S. versus the Japanese because we are the two largest exporters. It's not a national situation, it's the corporations. The "badguys" had all the symbiotes and the "goodguys" had captured this one symbiote. And, you see, the symbiotes live off of your emotions and feed off of the stuff that your body produces when it's in a "bad way." The symbiote sets you up to be kind of a jerk. If you're not very strong-willed it can...

Ordway: It takes advantage of however strong each of these people are internally. It determines how much control the symbiote has over that certain individual.

Gordon: And sometimes the individual isn't aware of how much influence the symbiote has. It's like sitting in a bar and thinking, "Boy, she's looking better every beer!" The WildStar is a pretty heavy hallucinogenic so once it's connected to you and it's influencing your chemical responses, it can increase certain hormonal responses to make you feel pissed off or whatever. The angrier you get, the more sated the symbiote becomes. So, it's a vicious circle. The more pissed off you get, it gives you more power... and the most powerful symbiote is probably WildStar.

It's like a drug. I'm certain anyone would get a thrill out of having the kind of power that WildStar wields and so you might find yourself getting angry just so you can enjoy the "power rush." Of course, at the same time there's the drawback

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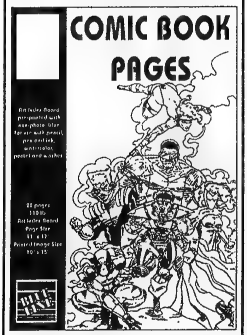

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of losing your humanity. And the symbiote feeds off of you so that you have to rest. When the story begins, WildStar probably hasn't even napped for about two weeks so we're talking about a very tired and angry soldier.

JM: *Cool. So, does WildStar have a name?*

Gordon: WildStar.

JM: *Nobody calls him George or Hank? [Pause] Oh, I see! It's something we can't give away, yet. Will we find out later?*

Gordon: Oh, yeah. He may turn out to be Elvis. Something I can give away is that the bad aliens are called the Ra'Zplarr and they find Earth, maybe a thousand years in the future from now, and they are really no match for us at this point because we've had this alliance with certain other aliens that have helped make mankind into a highly advanced and peace-loving culture [laughs].

Ordway: I think you may be confusing something here, Al. Maybe you should mention the good aliens.

Gordon: Oh, the "certain other" good aliens are called the Ky'Oans. That's who we have the friendly alliance with. They are a peace-loving and very powerful race. The bad aliens... man, all this sounds so hokey [laughs], they figure the only way they can get what they want on Earth, and we're not telling what that is, is to basically go back in time to before we've become a society that could give them any static. They seem to have access to a time-machine and go back to Earth in the 1990s. That's when the war starts.

JM: *So I have deduced that this future that has happened may not happen unless WildStar makes it happen.*

Gordon: Right.

Ordway: Joe, it's okay to be confused. I'm confused, already.

JM: *[Laughs] Jerry's the artist and he's like, "What?"*

Ordway: What's difficult about it is that we're talking the story as opposed to simply showing it to you.

JM: *Right. When we read it, everything will be perfect.*

Ordway: [Huge laughter] We hope so.

JM: *From what I've seen so far, which is more than most I would say, it looks majorly interesting.*

Gordon: I'm also hoping it will be fun. To be honest with you, I'm really trying to get away from explaining everything in the story [chuckle]. I think when you're done reading it, you will have a lot of questions and possible ideas about what is going on. There's still a lot of unanswered questions that will be answered in the second series and, like I said, I really don't want the exposition to get in the way of the fun of the story.

JM: *So how does it relate to the rest of the Image universe, or does it?*

Gordon: Yeah, it does, actually.

Ordway: One of the problems is that as projects get announced, we keep reading stuff other people are doing and it's like, "Oh, wow!" It seems like everybody is creating alien races and pretty soon we're going to have like within the span of a year as many alien races at Image as at DC or Marvel.

Gordon: And actually that's a plausible reason for doing a special future crossover. To explain exactly why so many aliens come to Earth.

JM: *Is this planet a magnet or what?*

Gordon: Exactly! It's something like that, actually. There's

IMAGE COMICS WILDSTAR#3
Cover Title WILDSTAR
No. #3
MONTH
IDENTIFICATION
ORDWAY & GORDON

really a reason why these aliens are coming to Earth.

Ordway: They're looking for Elvis.

JM: *[Laughs]*

Gordon: I'd like to mention that Erik's Savage Dragon is going to be in *WildStar #3*.

JM: *Excellent. I also read that WildStar dies in #3.*

Gordon: Yep. He takes a dirt nap.

Ordway: To throw a bit more confusion there, we've discussed what exactly would happen to the symbiote if the human host dies.

JM: *He'd probably end up like DeadStar.*

Gordon: Shhh!

Ordway: Well, each symbiote has different levels of power so it will be interesting to see what they can do. I'd like to see whether or not we could tie that in somehow to what Giffen is doing.

Gordon: Um, well, you know, I hadn't mentioned this to Jerry but [yet another chuckle] Keith and I have been talking about crossing WildStar over into the *Trencher* book, in fact and there's a character that I created that has actually crossed over into some other stories that I have written that ends up in this story. She is definitely going to be part of the *Trencher* series. Keith and I are going to have to get together and discuss how that will come about -- probably some sort of special annual crossover with the *Trencher* book.

JM: ***Trencher*** *will be out in May?*

Gordon: Right. Of course, it's already done.

JM: *Really?*

Gordon: Keith is so far ahead of schedule it's amazing. It's completed. He's tightening up the dialogue. I can't believe it. It's really cool-looking stuff, too. It should be a lot of fun. Keith just did a pin-up of WildStar that I'm sure we'll use at some point. Hopefully, we'll get a few more guys. I'm wanting to get Erik to pencil something and Jerry to ink it because I think those guys always make a cool team, if anybody remembers that *Doom Patrol* cover they did.

Ordway: Yeah, I've always liked Erik's stuff.

JM: *Doom Patrol #10, I believe. But, I heard you mention a second WildStar miniseries?*

Gordon: We haven't been approved, yet. There's a process it has to go through.

Ordway: We haven't sold enough Tupperware, yet.

Gordon: Well, actually Jerry sells the Avon stuff. I do Tupperware. Seriously, if the response is good for *WildStar* then we should get the okay for the second series. I think what we'll shoot for is a regular series that will come out maybe nine times a year instead of a monthly book.

JM: *That sounds great. I'm really pumped for you guys.*

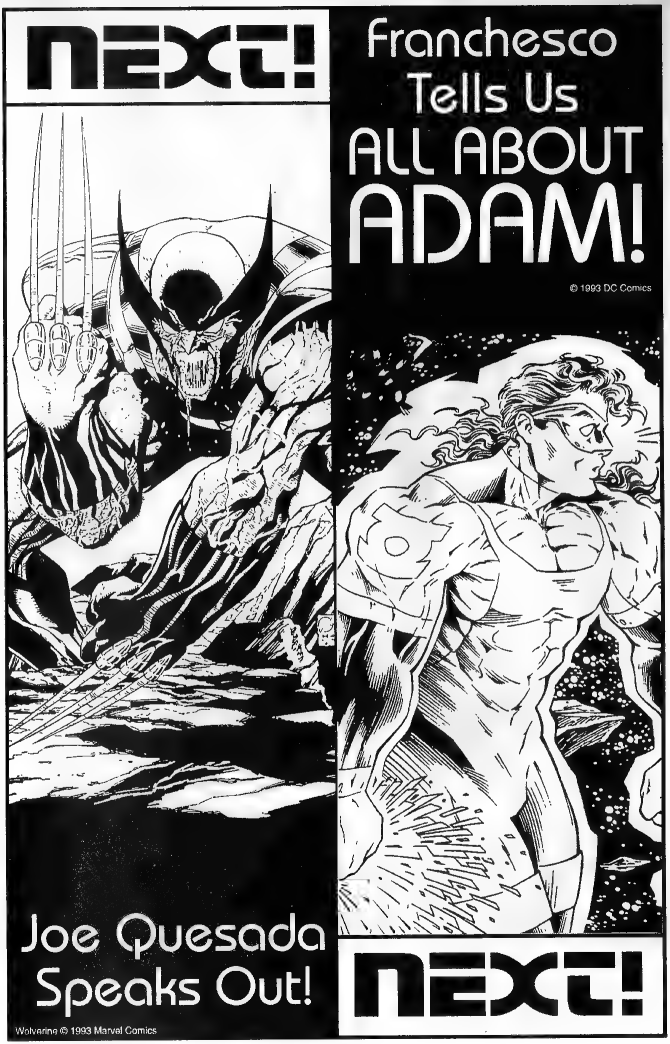
Ordway: Well, thanks, we hope everybody else is.

Gordon: Yeah, Image has been really good to us so far, and even through this hectic transition that they're going through, with the break from Malibu and all, they've really, well, Cheri [Liefeld] has been a tremendous help. Tony Lobito is our new publisher and he's been real prince. And Kyle Zimmerman and the rest have all been really great. We're really jazzed about all this really cool stuff!

JM: *Well, Arena's "jazzed", too.*

Gordon: Aw, shucks, thanks.

Ordway: Yeah, thanks, Joe. You're a prince.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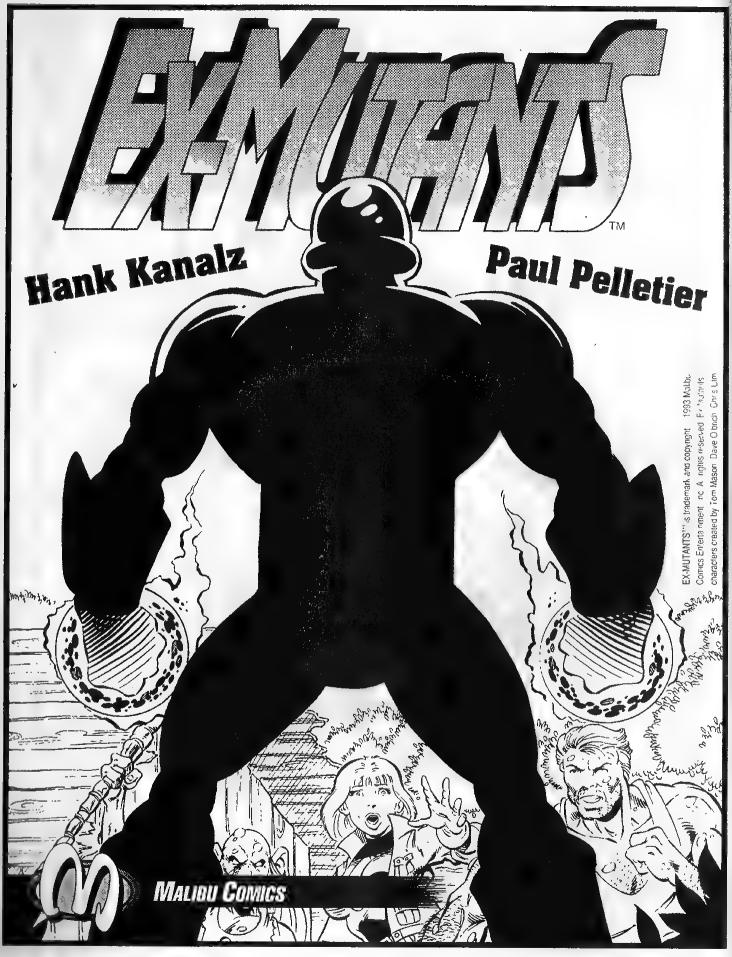
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Comic News

AC News

Good Girl Art

AC's *Good Girl Art Quarterly*, with story by Beau (Beau LaDuke) Smith and art and cover by C. Bradford (*Parts Unknown*) Gorby, heats up as the *Femforce*'s own Buckaroo Betty takes some fashion advice from She-Cat, and our normally conservative lady sheriff causes a sensation with a sexy new outfit. She also catches the eye of a wayward extra-terrestrial, who is on Earth for a little R and R. When he decides Betty books are even more delectable than the sweet treats in the ice cream truck he's hijacked, all hell breaks loose. Miss Betty is one filly who doesn't tame easily. All this and more as Betty tangles with "Slushie the Clown."

Also, FF fans wear your colors proudly, and show your friends what good taste you have in comic book material with this colorful "Femforce Fans Unite" badge. Don't be the last in your neighborhood to get one – order now!

Caliber News

All New Realm Series

Special giant sized 48 page first issue at the regular price! This new series of the *Realm* will relaunch the popular fantasy saga of four normal teenagers thrust into a world of magic. It is full of Dragons, elves, hobgoblins, and as they tragically discover, death. The new series will pick up some time after where the original series ended. The unresolved story from the first series ended with the unleashing of the terrible Daemonstorm. Now the Daemonstorm is over and the disastrous effects of that storm has devastated the world of the *Realm*. Readers of the original series will be excited by the changes that have occurred and new readers to the world of the *Realm* will be able to pick up this series right from the start as it will be entry level.

The creative team for the new series is Brent Truax as writer with Patrick Zircher, Brian Bendis, and Donald Marquez handling the art chores as each will chronicle different characters. This series will be scheduled for a monthly release providing the creators keep their schedule intact.

This new series will cover what happened to the main characters such as Silverfawn, Dom, Alex, Diggorous, Grappo, and Sandy. Due to the devastation of the Daemonstorm, not all of the characters have survived and some of the ones that did have been changed forever. The *Realm* world itself has been changed dramatically as old power structures have fallen and new alliances have formed. While this series will retain much of the original essence of the series, it will be a little darker atmosphere than the previous but readers can still expect to see all of their old favorites.

Realm Handbook

In this special one shot which serves as the perfect companion to the new on-going series, readers will have an instant reference guide to the many races that inhabit the *Realm*, maps of Azoth, character profiles, and a brief history of what has gone on in the *Realm*.

Also covered here will be an explanation of what happened during the rage of Daemonstorm and how the Realm has been affected forever. Astute readers may also pick up some clues on the effect that the four travelers from our time have had on the *Realm* as well as those that went before them.

Although this is not necessary for readers to pick up in order to follow the *Realm* series, *The Realm Handbook* will serve as a handy reference guide and instant sourcebook. Recommended for fans of this highly popular fantasy series.

Your Cartoon Guide To The Inevitable

Ugly Reality is a unique collection from creator Seth Feinberg. Starring in this agonizingly funny smorgasbord of random observations of this wacky and insane world in which we live is the "Rock and Roll Scenemaker" cards that were just featured in *Comic Journal*. Packed chocked full of the kind of misanthrope social critique whimpering autobiographical tragic-comedy and quasi-surreal nuttiness that today's discerning comic book readers crave, this one shot is lavishly illustrated in Feinberg's patented "ultra-detail" style. This issue features "Temp-Hell", the ultimate guide for office drone survival, the literally cryptic "Exotic Scenarios" and much more. It will amaze, startle, and delight even the most jaded connoisseur of the art form. Don't miss out on "Your cartoon guide to the inevitable!"

Conquest News

Conquest Press announces the publication of *Skin & Bones*! A three issue horror miniseries starting bi-monthly in April '93. "Skin" is the ultimate mad slasher! "Bones" is a "realistic" superhero! Together they are the creation of artist/ writer Timothy Marking.

A comic reader since the days of *The Crusty Bunkers*, Marking has dabbled in comics but never actively pursued a career in the field. A freelance artist for many years until moving into film and video pre-production, Tim is currently an award-winning Visual Designer and Associate Producer for a Florida-based production company.

Tim describes *Skin & Bones* as "Alan Moore's 'Rorshach' versus a splatterpunk 'Joker', with a little Clive Barker, The Shadow, and Bernie Goetz thrown in for flavor..."

"*S & B*" is a comic book adaptation of one of the many stillborn film projects that Marking has been involved with over the years. He supplies his own fully painted covers for the miniseries. *Skin & Bones* is not for the faint of heart! Mature readers only. Three issues starting in April from Conquest!

Continuity News

Deathwatch Begins

It is malevolent. It is able to assume many forms. It is the Deathwatch...and it is coming for Earth.

The crossover itself begins in April, when *Deathwatch 2000: Prelude* sets the stage for the conflict in the pages of six Continuity titles--*Armor*, *Hybrids*, *Megalith*, *CyberRad*, *Valeria The She-Bat*,and *Ms. Mystic*--each polybagged with 1 of 11 randomly inserted trading cards (from Classic Games) and sporting special cover enhancements. All are #1's, as all titles will be starting fresh with the crossover.

There will also be two "chase cards" in the set: She-Bat (to be found in 1 of every 25 comics distributed) and Shaman (1 per 50 comics). Plus, 200 coupons--which can be redeemed for a free, poster-sized, signed She-Bat lithograph by Neal Adams--will be randomly inserted into issues throughout the Crossover.

In addition, for every set of 6 *Prelude* issues ordered from the *Deathwatch 2000* titles in April, retailers will receive an Incentive Pack containing #0 issues of *Megalith* and *Hybrids*, which also feature cover enhancements and *Prelude* tales. Retailers will also get special cards for their customers. For each *Prelude* chapter purchased, the customer gets a hole punched in his/her card; the purchase of all six chapters guarantees that the customer can claim their own #0 copies of *Megalith* and *Hybrids*.

"Ironically, *Deathwatch* marks a rebirth for the Continuity universe," said *Previews* [Diamond Comic's Catalogue] Associate Editor Marty Grosser, "since all of their titles are starting over during the *Prelude*. Everyone on the *Previews* staff is excited about participating in the crossover, and we know retailers and readers will be excited, too."

DC News

A Burst of Static

DC continues the launch of the groundbreaking Milestone line of comics with *Static*, the fourth of Milestone's core titles.

Fifteen-year-old Virgil Hawkins never knew what hit him. Of one thing he was certain, though--he'd picked the wrong night to get even with the gang member who'd humiliated

him. Pushed way over the edge, Virgil had tracked his assailant to Paris Island on the night of the "Big-Bang"--and was washed in the same radioactive marker that created the Blood Syndicate.

Virgil now finds himself charged with electrostatic powers. Capable of force-field creation, flight, "taser punches," and lightning strikes, he slowly starts to see the possibilities these new powers present. Now Virgil lives a dual life: one as the upopular, unremarkable teenager he'd been; and the other as Static, a swashbuckling urban hero confronting a host of super-powered villains, as well as the grim realities of life in the city of Dakota.

Static is written by Dwayne (*Blood Syndicate*, *Hardware* and *Prince: Alter Ego*) McDuffie and Robert L. (*Hellraiser*) Washington, III. Art is supplied by John Paul (*Robocop: Prime Suspect*) Leon and Steve (*Batman*, *Detective Comics*) Mitchell, in full-process color. Denys Cowan and Jimmy Palmiotti provide cover art for issue #1.

The Geek Returns

It's a freak. A monster. A geek. An abandoned tailor's dummy, charged with an errant spark of life; an elemental innocent, "born" in a bygone age when young people gathered in a bond of poverty, seeking love and peace.

Times have changed.

Today, the Geek returns to fight for its own soul in the one-shot special from DC's Vertigo line *Vertigo Visions--The Geek*.

Vertigo Visions is the new umbrella title for one-shot specials that put the Vertigo spin on the dark fringes of the DC Universe. In this first entry, Brother Power, the Geek, the offbeat cult character created by Joe Simon in 1968 and revitalized by Neil Gaiman in the 1989 *Swamp Thing Annual*, gets a newer, stranger twist from writer Rachel Pollack, whose current *Doom Patrol* stories have brought the series to even weirder heights. Artist Michael Dalton Allred, the creator of the quirky hit *Madman* from Tundra, is having the time of his life with a character that perfectly suits his bizarre sensibilities. The painted cover is by Allred and popular artist Matt Wagner.

The Geek is suffused with the deep characterization, creepy atmosphere and bold irreverence that mark popular Vertigo projects like *Enigma* and *Doom Patrol*. While set in the dark corner of the DC Universe inhabited by *Sandman* and *Hellblazer*, The Geek is distinguished among Vertigo titles by its lead character's disarming innocence.

The evil Dr. Abuse and his fellow Corruption Elementals, threatened by the Geek's innocence, have it into a string of self-destructive post-'60's lifestyles as a junk-bond dealer, kinky prostitute, talk-show codependent and circus freak. Tortured by its helpless descent into narcissism, greed, corruption, and self-hatred, our hero is haunted by the ghost of its youthful ideals...and by other powerful spirits, too.

Now, at last, The Geek lives to fight for its soul again.

Battle Lines Drawn in Blood

Get set for a crossover series of cataclysmic proportions, as New Blood infuses the DC Universe in the Annuals event of 1993: *Bloodlines*, an exciting horror story that gives rise to DC superstars of the future!

Bloodlines introduces an assortment of entirely new characters who are created in each of this summer's DC Universe annuals. It all begins when a group of extraterrestrial parasites crash-land on Earth. Seven monsters emerge an quietly begin a series of grisly murders, feeding upon human spinal fluid. Some of the victims miraculously recover, only to find that they've gained paranormal powers. What happens next is DC history in the making, as a host of superpowered humans spontaneously arise all across the world. These are the New Blood, the DC Universe's newest heroes and villains. Drawn irresistibly into this paranormal population explosion is the long-standing vanguard of Earth's established heroes, struggling

to hold back the storm of death that threatens to result from the extraterrestrials' deadly biological agenda. Fan-favorite artist Arthur Adams designed the monstrous parasites as well as their more attractive human forms.

Bloodlines occurs in three waves of DC annuals and culminates in an incredible two-part climax that pits all the DC heroes and all the New Blood against the horrible result of the parasites' catastrophic imperative. The New Blood get their baptism of fire in *Bloodbath #1* and *#2*, following hot on the heels of *Bloodlines*, and the startling resolution of this epic megastory will rock the house!

Bloodlines, coordinated by editor Dan Raspler, begins in *Lobo Annual #1*, shipping May 4. (See individual listings.) Thereafter, the story continues at a rate of one Annual per week for 23 weeks.

The battle lines are drawn...in blood.

Chain Gang War

Chain Gang War, a new ongoing action-adventure series, debuts with an embossed foil cover enhancement appearing on the logo and on a chain graphic. John Wagner, veteran

writer of *Batman/Judge Dredd: Judgment on Gotham*, joins rising artists Dave Johnson and John Dell for a series placed solidly in the gritty underside of the DC Universe, where shocks and twists abound. Fans of Marvel's *The Punisher* will love *Chain Gang War*, which lets loose with high-calibre action and intrigue, as a trio of armed vigilantes goes gunning for both street scum and super-villains. But quick executions aren't necessarily their style; they're into punishment. And for that they have the House of Correction, an inescapable dungeon far below the Strang mansion, where the Chain Gang dispenses justice, despite the law.

The Chain Gang has its share of friends and foes: police detective Joe Shanahan wants to bring them in and put them away for good; investigative reporter Marian Hawley wants the inside story on the Gang; and may go to extremes to get it; and the city is so frustrated with crime and motivated by fear that the anger boils over into support for the vigilantes. With that much attention, it's a safe be the Chain Gang won't long escape the notice of the likes of Batman and Deathstroke. Ships in May.

Defiant News

Shooter Reloads

Jim Shooter is venturing into the world of publishing again, with the start of Defiant.

According to the *Comic Buyers Guide*, Shooter's contractual obligations with Voyager Communications expired October 18, 1992, and he has now lined up financing to start his new comic-book publishing company.

"I'll be publishing comic books under the Defiant imprint," Shooter said. The first project to come out under Defiant's imprint will be *Plasm*, by Shooter and artist David Lapham.

Other industry sources have reported that Shooter has accepted a proposal by an investment group that also has financial dealings with Score sports cards. The investment group is willing to give Shooter the financing he needs to get Defiant up and running in exchange for card rights to his future creations and a minority share of the common stock.

For his part of the deal, Shooter would gain the majority of the stock in the new company as well as complete financial and editorial control.

Because of the track record he established with Voyager/Valiant, other investment groups had made similar offers, but with slight less favorable terms and conditions.

Now that Shooter has worked out the financial aspects of his new publishing company, editorial plans are being made. He is currently working with marketing strategists to plan his overall re-emergence as a new comic company, and hopes to have eight titles going within two years. So far, though, there have been no actual agreements set by any creators.

"I've had a lot of creative people and support-troop type people expressing interest in working on a new venture with me," Shooter continued. "We'll have a good foundation, a good creative nucleus right off the bat."

Fantaco News

Night of the Living Dead

Fantaco publishing has announced the *Night of the Living Dead: London* two issue series written by Clive Barker and Steve Niles will ship in three varying formats.

In March, issue #1 *Bloodline* in prestige format will ship with a cover price of $5.95, followed in April with two special edition hardcovers. The first is a collector's edition hardcover featuring a new cover by Clive Barker, numbered and limited to 150 copies only.

"We found that many of the loyal Night of the Living Dead readers prefer to buy the hardcover format for collectability, this way they can have the hardcover with an added extra. When reviewing possible covers, Clive really liked two versions we had come up with and suggested we incorporate both somehow. The thing that really makes a difference is they are modestly priced for hardcovers, we're not doing a big print run to bleed the fans dry with multiple covers. We already have a loyal number of fans who will choose the hardcover over the regular edition; this is for them," states Jim Whiting, project coordinator on the *Night of the Living Dead: London* series.

Fleetway News

Dredd by Bisley

Broken bones, bleeding wounds, excessive head trauma, and painful swelling! It's

Dredd's stock in trade, and by happy coincidence, Simon Bisley's as well! It was destiny that these two mega-stars should meet and get along so well together!

With is work on *Slaine, the Horned God*, *Lobo*, *Doom Patrol*, and the Bat-classic *Judgment on Gotham*, Bisley has forged a career that has made him one of the hottest illustrators of the last twenty years! His ability to breathe life into his paintings and convey raw power and emotion is second to none in the industry today!

In *Dredd by Bisley*, a complete collection of very special Judge Dredd stories by John Wagner and Alan Grant are assembled into one book, and contains material never before published in the U.S. (some of which are strongly recommended for mature readers!). You'll see the good Judge come up against punks, bikers, dead metal heads, and would-be smugglers, and deal with them in a style that's pure Bisley! If you like your crime=fighting hyper-violent and over-the-edge, then this book is for you!

Dredd by Bisley is a squarebound book in fully-painted color with laminated board covers. Contains material never before published in the U.S.! Recommended for mature readers with strong stomachs and an open mind about ripped tendons!

Earth, Wind & Fire

Marlon "Chopper" Shakespeare was the greatest sky-surfer that ever flew a board! He was a legend in his own time, taking on the baddest Judge in Mega-One and becoming a celebrity for it! But it all ended the day of Super-Surf 11, the gnarliest contest for surfers on the planet! But somebody changed the rules, and an already dangerous game became deadly, and almost killed Chopper.

It's now months later, and a far mellower Chopper enjoys a peaceful existence down under in the outback of Oz. With his fellow surfers, it's an idyllic life of cool nights, warm friends, and cold beer. That is, until retribution for SuperSurf 11 comes in the form of an orbiting laser satellite. Someone with a lot of clout wants Chopper dead, by any means necessary! If that means killing everyone in a 1-mile radius - so be it!

Now Shakespeare must strap the board on once again, not to soar and touch the clouds, but to mete out some retribution of his own! His perfect life's just been destroyed, and he's going to find out who did it and why!

It's a surfin' safari loaded for bear, as Garth Ennis and John McCrea team up for this fast-moving sequel to the graphic novel *Chopper - Song of the Surfer*. *Chopper: Earth, Wind & Fire Book 1 of 2* contains material never before published in the U.S. in fully painted color.

Ships in April.

Harris News

Exploding With Action

Jude Cain, patriot and cybernetically enhanced government agent, is caught in the grind--set up for a murder he didn't commit, and on the run from the Agency. He's tracking the trail of a Senator's runaway daughter, who turns out to be much more than she seems. Is she his ticket back to legitimacy and prestige, or a super-powered street urchin?

Set on the streets of New York, against the background of the crumbling Cold War, *Cain* mixes superhero action with conspiracy theory. Join David Quinn, Hannibal King, and Matt Banning in May for a look at a different type of hero.

Blood Shed

After her adventures in Europe, Vampirella returns to an America where the monster legions of the Unseelie Congress still haunt the streets--and they want her dead! To get the job done, they recruit the relentless high-tech hitman Hemorrhage, who uses his telekinetic powers to create "sculptures" from the blood of his victims. How can Vampirella defeat a villain who controls the source of her strength? *Vampirella#6* is written by Tom Sniegoski with artwork by Karl Altstaetter.

Heroic News

She-Bat Sales Accelerate

One week after Heroic Publishing's new *Sparkplug* comic book stunned comic book retailers with astonishingly

rapid sell-throughs taking place, often within hours of going on sale, the same thing happened for Heroic with the second issue of Daerick Gross's new *Murcielaga She-Bat* title. At comic book retail stores across the entire country, sales of *Murcielaga She-Bat #2* were sizzling hotter than virtually anyone had expected.

Moreover, the sudden surge in sales of issue #2 had an immediate and dramatic effect on prices being asked for the already rare first issue. At a tiny little mall show in West Covina, CA, the weekend of January 30-31, no less than forty copies of *Murcielaga She-Bat #1* were sold at $5.00 each. Not more than three times the price currently listed in most comic book price guides!

The most amazing thing about it is that all of this recent surge in activity with the various Heroic Publishing titles, of which *Sparkplug* and *Murcielaga She-Bat* are only the most recent and obvious examples, has been taking place invisibly. Most comic book back issue retailers have been oblivious to it, in large part precisely (and ironically) *because* everything Heroic has been publishing since the summer of 1992 has been selling so well. On comic books that were printed in relatively small numbers to begin with, and which experience close to 100% sell-through, there simply aren't any significant numbers of copies moving into the back issue market!

But indications are that what's happening with the Heroic titles won't be invisible for very much longer. With each new issue that sells out, with the pace of the sell-outs picking up speed, it's becoming ever clearer to those who *are* paying attention that the time to get hold of copies of the Heroic titles is *now*. If you wait until 40,000 fans start looking for comic books that exist in fewer than 10,000, it may be too late.

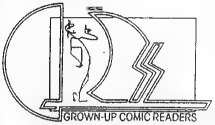


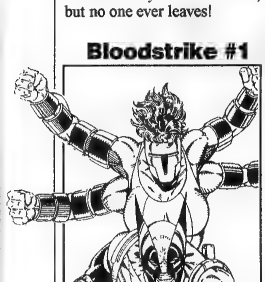
Image News

Deathblow #1

Special black varnish cover. Set during Desert Storm, Deathblow is activated by his Control Officer for a covert mission in Baghdad. Upon his arrival at the staging site, however, Cray learns he's been assigned to a CIA special ops team with orders to assassinate Saddam

Hussein! And, as if that weren't enough for Cray to worry about, dark and strange nightmares now plague him whenever he sleeps. Plus! A new back-up story by Jim Lee, Brandon Choi, and hot new Image rookie Nick Manabat introduces the dark and dangerous world of *The Cybernary*! It's a world where unimaginable wealth and depravity clash with cutting edge cybertechnology in a realm dominated by cyber-punks, cyborg killers, and corrupt technocrats. Anyone is welcome, but no one ever leaves!

Bloodstrike #1



Blood Brothers prelude featuring a special thermal spot embossed cover. Introducing Cabbot, Deadlock, Fourplay, Shogun, and Tag. Five unstoppable killing machines who've defied death and now make up the ultra secret task force known as Bloodstrike.

Brigade #1

Part 1 of the five-part Blood Brothers storyline featuring Bloodstrike! the first issue of the *Brigade* regular series kicks off with a bang as Battlestone and crew return home from space only to walk into an ambush at the hands of Bloodstrike! Also, this issue marks the first of a series of changes that will affect each and every member of Brigade for years to come, beginning with the death of one of their own.

Phantom Force #1

When it's discovered the U.S. government has been withholding the antidote to the deadly Black Virus plaguing our world, it's up to the members of Phantom Force in infiltrate the government's secret holding area and steal back the antidote for the preservation of all humankind! Jack "King" Kirby joins forces with Image Comics to present his last completely penciled story in the form of *Phantom Force #1*. Penciled and plotted by the legendary artist behind *Captain America*, the *Fantastic Four*, *Mister Miracle*, and the *New Gods*, the first part of this three-issue miniseries is inked by five of the hottest artists in comics today: Rob Liefeld, Todd McFarlane, Jim Lee, Erik Larsen, and Scott Williams. As a special bonus, *Phantom Force # 1* will be polybagged to include one of five cards by Liefeld, McFarlane, Lee, and Larsen.

1963 #1: Mystery, Inc.

Once upon a time, heroes were heroes, facing the unknown with dignity and intelligence as well as strength. Perhaps you remember those glorious days of yesteryear, when comics were filled with a genuine sense of mystery and adventure; four-color fantasies that could take you on breathtaking journeys to fantastic worlds of wonder and imagination with every turn of the page. Those heroes, those days, have returned. Image Comics invites you to turn the page to 1963! This all-new, all-vintage super-hero series for all ages launches with *Mystery Inc.*, from Alan Moore, Rick Veitch, and Dave Gibbons. Meet Crystalman, The Planet, Neon Queen, and Kid Dynamo, along with the multifarious Maybe Machine as Mystery Inc. introduces the 1963 universe with a bang!

Image Plus #1

This poly-bagged one-shot features everything you'd ever want to know about the seven founders of Image Comics, including personal information on all your favorite Image artists

Video Game Debuts As Full Color Comic

Get ready to rumble! The hottest video game of the '90's debuts as a hot full color in-your-face comic book! From across the globe comes eight of the wildest fighters the world has ever known! Join the excitement as Chun-Li, Ryu, Ken, Sagat, Honda and the rest make the leap from the arcades and home video direct to the comic book page in *Street Fighter*!

Malibu Comics will present the first fully authorized *Street Fighter* comic book on a monthly basis beginning in May 1993. The series will be written by Len Strazewski, one of the star writers of Malibu's Ultraverse, and illustrated by hot newcomers Don Hillsman and Jeff Whiting. Malibu and Capcom USA, the game's U.S. distributor, are working on a number of promotions, including a contest to give away three free Street Fighter II arcade games.

"The *Street Fighter* comic will be absolutely action-packed, just like the game," Strazewski said. "I'm writing the story to appeal to both comics fans and game players." Strazewski hopes that reading the comic will actually enhance game-playing for people who are into the game. "Those who are not into the game will get a flavor for the excitement of the game, and may want to play it," he said.

In *Street Fighter #1*, Bison issues a challenge to Sagat--destroy Ken to lure Ryu into the world arena for a final fight to the death! Strazewski said, "We'll see a brief flashback to an earlier Street Fighter tournament in which Ryu defeats Sagat. The first storyline will involve Sagat's revenge against Ryu, and will be very bloody." Strazewski also has brutal plans for a less fortunate Street Fighter--one who may not survive the series.

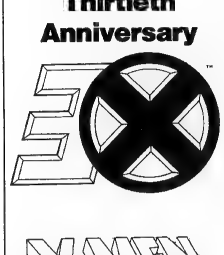
According to Creative Director Tom Mason, "Action fans will be pleased. Street Fighter II is not your average game and with the comic we've jacked up the action and violence to incredible levels. Hillsman's art is very intense, very in-your-face and it brings *Street Fighter* several notches above the average comic. Neither comic book fans nor game players will be disappointed." Both Mason and Strazewski have been working with Capcom USA and several *Street Fighter* experts to reveal heretofore unknown secrets about the various fighters. "There a tremendous back story that's been passed from fan to fan through word of mouth and through the fanzines. We'll be working a lot of that into the storyline."

Malibu and Capcom will be combining their resources for some hard-hitting promotions on *Street Fighter*, including game giveaways, free watches, posters, mobiles and other specialty projects. Additionally, Capcom and Malibu are working on licensing *Street Fighter* for a line of trading cards and action figures. A live-action *Street Fighter* movie is currently being filmed in Japan and Capcom is considering expanding the *Street Fighter* game platform beyond its current Super-Nintendo format.

For more Malibu News, see the special Ultraverse article on page 72.

Marvel News

X-Men Celebrate Thirtieth Anniversary



The X-Men, Marvel's group of mutant super-heroes, current stars of the hit Fox television series, and perhaps the most popular comic book characters of all time, will be celebrating their thirtieth anniversary during 1993. Created by Stan Lee and drawn by Jack Kirby in 1963, The Uncanny X-Men are a team of super powered mutants who are hated and feared by the general populous because of their unique powers. The original team featuring Cyclops, Beast, Iceman, Angel, and Jean Grey were banded together for their protection and education by Professor Charles Xavier, and has fought an endless battle to quell the world's prejudice for those who are different. Revamped in 1975 to introduce such popular characters as Wolverine, Storm, Colossus, and Nightcrawler, the team was quick to rise to the top of fan popularity. The group has become so popular that a whole group of 'X-Men family' titles have appeared during the years. These titles include the original monthly title, *The Uncanny X-Men*, *Wolverine*, *X-Factor*, *Excalibur*, and the recently launched hit entitled simply *X-Men*. When introduced two years ago, *X-Men # 1* established itself as the best selling comic of all time. In addition to these titles, Marvel introduced *X-Men Adventures* in the fall of 1992 to chronicle the continuity of the Fox television series.

To celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of this enduring team, Marvel has quite a few projects planned. In March, Marvel will release a double-sized 300th issue of *Uncanny X-Men* that will set up a very special storyline which will lead to this summers special anniversary issues. Regular fans of The X-Men will attest to complex, socially relevant storylines that have been a trademark of the series--and what is planned for their anniversary will bring suspense, triumph and tragedy to the team. The actual anniversary will take place sequentially in *X-Factor #92*, *X-Force #25*, *Uncanny X-Men #304* (the actual anniversary issue), *X-Men #25*, and *Wolverine #75*. All these anniversary issues will sport special covers featuring the most advanced holograms ever printed on a comic. These holograms will offer a level of depth that will propel the holographic image above the cover of the book. The special holographic covers that graced Marvel's Spider-Man anniversary covers last year have become very collectible items and the X-Men holograms are sure to follow suit.

In addition to these anniversary issues, this year will also see the premiere of the new *X-Men Unlimited* series, a new quarterly title that will feature the adventures of the X-Men by some of the top creators in the field, all published on high quality paper stock. For fans with a desire for X-Men nostalgia, Marvel has published multiple volumes of the deluxe hardcover *X-Men Marvel Masterworks* which reprints the classic adventures of the X-Men.

X-cutioner in Uncanny X-Men Annual

As the celebration of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the X-Men picks up speed, *Uncanny X-Men Annual #17* introduces a major new foe for the heroic team of mutants. In keeping with this years tradition of introducing major new Marvel characters in the pages of the years annuals, *Uncanny X-Men Annual #17* will introduce the X-cutioner. Writer Scott Lobdell introduces us to this deadly new villain in the lead story, which is illustrated by Jason Pearson and inked by Mark Farmer. Pearson's art will give readers a whole new interpretation of the group that has taken the world of comics, and Saturday morning cartoons, by storm. Also included in the annual will be a back up story spotlighting Sienna Blaze, a deadly new villain who will play a major part

in the upcoming *X-Men Unlimited #1* as well as this summer's X-Men Thirtieth Anniversary celebration.

X-Men Annual #17, in addition to introducing new villain X-cutioner, brings back the Mastermind, one of the X-Men's oldest foes. As we join the Mastermind, he is on his death bed, but his passing may be quickened when we learn that he is a target for the X-cutioner. X-cutioner is following his own deadly agenda of executing those he feels are evil mutants. His method of judgment is not too clear, however, and this puts him directly into conflict with the X-Men, who not only abhor all killing, but also feel that they may just fall into X-cutioner's definition of 'evil'.

The Infinity Trilogy Concludes

The final section of Jim Starlin's Infinity Trilogy begins this April in *The Infinity Crusade #1*. Starlin once again teams up with fan favorite Ron Lim and inker Al Milgrom, to follow The Goddess, Adam Warlock's purely good, feminine side, as she attempts to rid the universe of all evil and bring it to spiritual redemption-even if she must destroy it in the process. As the 6 part series unfolds, the fate of every character int eh Marvel Universe will hang in the balance.

Jim Starlin began the Infinity Trilogy two years ago with the publication of the *Infinity Gauntlet*, the epic tale that told the story of Thanos' quest to obtain the ultimate source of power--the Infinity Gems. It was during the scripting of that multi-part story that Starlin first came up with the trilogy concept. "As I was finishing off the *Gauntlet*," said Starlin, "other ideas began to spill into mind and finally somebody said, 'Hey, why don't you do a trilogy?' and I said, 'fine'. I had the ideas, I just hadn't voiced them yet." What followed was *The Infinity War*, a tale of conflict between the Magus, Adam Warlock's pure evil side, and Marvel's assembled heroes.

The Infinity Crusade #1 opens to find another of Warlock's 'sides' again threatening the universe. This time it is his purely good side that has plans for universal domination. Though her goals are benevolent, The Goddess will stop at nothing to rid the universe from all vestiges of evil. Armed with the power of the Cosmic Cubes, the Goddess selects 35 of Marvel's most spiritually pure Super-Heroes and mesmerizes them to serve her holy mission. Starlin added, "She picks the folks who have a touch with the spiritual. She picks the best of the lot, basically. She doesn't take Wolverine, she takes Storm. She doesn't grab The Thing, she grabs Dr. Strange. She touches into their spirit and uses that to enthrall them. There are a few (heroes) that give her a little bit of trouble, but they're dealt with in various different ways."

The Infinity Crusade will cross over into many of the regular monthly Marvel titles, but will have a major impact in the monthly *Warlock and the Infinity Watch* and the upcoming new regular series *Warlock Chronicles*. Starlin explained the link between the Warlock titles and the Infinity Crusade, "Gamora and Moon Dragon are converted, and Warlock is taken out of the picture. Before, the whole story was contained inside the Infinity War and the Infinity Gauntlet. Now the story filters off in the two Warlock monthlies, it's more closely connected. Where before it was a two hundred page story, now it's a four hundred page story." Starlin added, "As a result of the Infinity Crusade, we will also reveal who holds the Reality Gem. This revelation will occur in the Warlock Chronicles."

She Hulk Kicks The Bucket

Jennifer Walters, noted attorney and alter ego of the sensational She-Hulk, will die in the 52nd issue of *She-Hulk* but this development will in no way alter the status of her successful monthly comic. Series writer Michael Eury, penciller Todd Britton, and inker Mike DeCarlo issued a joint statement from

their self imposed exile explaining that Walters was killed in the first part of a six-part storyline entitled "To Die and Live in L.A."

She-Hulk #52 picks up following events in *She-Hulk #50*, particularly our late heroine's battle with the robot 'War Zone'. Although victorious in the battle, Jennifer's gamma ray based powers were apparently seriously weakened due to her exposure to War Zone's deadly gas attack. With her power fading by the minute, Jennifer begins to realize that a mysterious 'stalker' is apparently after her and that the attack by War Zone may just have been part of his 'fatal attraction'. Before she can recover, the She-Hulk is thrust into a conflict with the Rumbler, an earthquake causing villain who looks a lot like James Dean. It is during this battle that Jennifer Walters meets an unkind end.

Series editor Renee Witterstaetter explained the ramifications of Jennifer's death, "She-Hulk is presently in the throes of an after death experience. During this time she will meet other Marvel characters who have gone to the great beyond. I think that death may not be such a bad thing for Jennifer. I feel that she will come thought it as a different heroine altogether, maybe more self aware, and maybe a little bit more careful. Other than that, she will still be the sexy, voluptuous and vivacious person we have all come to love." "Her death," Rene added, "will, however, seriously affect her personal life."

Forget that other guy's return and witness the death of the She-Hulk. *She-Hulk #52* ships in April.

Pure Imagination News

Betty Page Interviewed!

Betty Page, the Missing Pin-Up Queen, has finally come out of seclusion and is ready to reveal the details of her disappearance. Betty Page discusses her life in detail, from her birth to her current status. Find out what Betty thinks about all of this attention!

The Betty Pages Annual Vol. 2 covers Betty's non-professional life with detail and insight. Over twenty-five years after her disappearance, Betty Page speaks her mind!

This volume also contains dozens of previously unpublished photos of Betty Page and the people who knew and loved her. At the beach and in the camera clubs behind closed doors, it's over fifty never before seen shots of Betty Page in action. Eight color pages are also included in this volume.

The second part of *The Betty Pages Annual Vol. 2* is our gigantic Betty checklist, containing hundreds of detailed listings of her photographic appearances. A valuable tool in you hunt for Page pages. We give you a head start by reproducing dozens of her rare appearances in the magazines of the 1950's.

The combined features are the final word on this world-famous model. Finally, read the solution to "The Case of the Missing Pin-Up Queen."

Sky News

Sky Comics hits the early summer shelves with two fresh titles. The first of them being the *Morgana X Special #1* written and pencilled by Quinton Hoover and inked by Allen (*Speed Racer*) Freeman. This notorious gun-for-hire takes a great deal of pride in her work. Morgana's got good aim and a bad attitude and she's making a name for herself among those who like to keep their hands clean while doing dirty work.

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TODAY'S EARFORCE

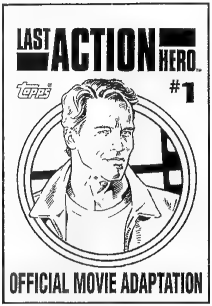
In the vein of Epic's *Alien Legion*, Hoover and Freeman's *Morgana X* is set in the space-faring future with plenty of action and a downright multitude of extraterrestrials. Embark on three separate missions in this special issue that preludes the forthcoming *Morgana X* minseries. "If Morgana goes well," says creator Allen Freeman, "Quint and I plan to publish a six-issue epic series that you'll have to see to believe."

The second release from Sky is entitled *Race Danger #1*. A one-shot that introduces race car driver, Dylan Danger, who, in making a name for himself on the Nascar circuit, has acquired the appellation, "Race." Created by Bob Hickey, written by Dwayne Haddix, pencilled by Dan Lauer and inked by Chris Leidenfrost, Race is in for some major league surprises as a result of the death of a loved one. With a vendetta to fulfill, he sets out on a trail of high action, espionage and revenge with a souped-up vehicle and a few pieces of hardware. "Danger's badder than Bruce Willis with a ponytail!" says Haddix. Sounds like a good time. The cover is by fan-favoites Joe Martin and Bob Hickey.

Both titles ship in June.

Topps News

Schwarzenegger Adaptation



Arnold Schwarzenegger, the world's top box-office attraction, stars as Jack Slater in Last Action Hero, a Columbia Pictures fantasy adventure film scheduled for release on June 18. Topps Comics is adapting the movie screenplay into a three-part monthly series commencing in June. The full-color comic books are scripted by Stefan Petrucha, pencilled by Jerome Moore and inked by John Nyberg. Each issue is polybagged with exclusive *Last Action Hero* trading cards.

The *Last Action Hero* storyline revolves around a young boy, Danny Madigan, who finds a magical movie ticket. This ticket enables him to blast out of the real world and up onto the screen with his greatest movie hero, Jack Slater (Arnold Schwarzenegger). Suddenly, young Danny is dodging bullets, crashing cars, flying through windows and taking on the bad guys when teamed with Slater on an incredible adventure in a fictional movie world where anything is possible. *Last Action Hero* is a fantastic nonstop chase between two worlds, filled with outrageous thrills, humor, and heart as both Jack and Danny learn that life in the real world is never quite the same as it is in the movies.

Columbia Pictures is positioning *Last Action Hero* as its major release for summer '93 and will support the film with a multimillion dollar advertising, promotional, and marketing campaign. Burger King is sponsoring a nationwide fast food promotion while a host of leading manufacturers will produce a variety of licensed products. Among the *Last Action Hero* licensees are Mattel (action figures, playsets), Berkley Books (paperback novelization), Sony Electronic Publishing (video games), Tiger Electronics (electronic games), and Data East (pinball machines), among others.

Topps Comics editor-in-chief Jim Salicrup is enthused about adapting this unique film property and the creative team he has assembled. "Chronicling the thrilling exploits of Jack Slater is a natural for the comics medium and, in the tradition of our *Bram Stoker's Dracula* movie tie-in, we've lined up a very talented combination of creators to bring Slater's heroic antics to the vanguard of comic fans," says Salicrup.

The quirky, new-wave writing style of comics scripter Stefan Petrucha makes him perfectly suited for capturing the film's outrageous, over-the-top action. Jerome Moore's pencil artwork provides a dramatic interpretation of the film's lavish sets and action sequences. As seen in his striking covers for *Star Trek* and *The Next Generation* (DC), Moore also possesses a rare ability to illustrate actor likenesses with uncanny accuracy. Veteran inker John Nyberg brought to life Mike Mignola's

BLOOD & ROSES
Jerry Smith, Gene Gonzalez and Bob Hickey

THE SEEKER
Joe Martin, Willie Peppers and Allen Freeman

MORGANA X
Quinton Hoover and Allen Freeman

THIS SUMMER.
SKY COMICS.

pencils for Topps' acclaimed *Bram Stoker's Dracula* movie adaptation. John's sensitivity to his source material and his adept command of visual drama make him one of the most exciting inkers today.

Separately from its line of comics, Topps will publish a series of *Last Action Hero* movie trading cards. The trading cards in this series will be different than those polybagged inside

Tundra News

If you thought that daring humor comics had vanished along with Underground Comix of the '60's, think again. Under the guiding hand of Art Director/cartoonist Mark Martin, Tundra Publishing Ltd. has assembled a select stable of cutting edge talents and created a crosscurrent of humor comics that will satisfy tastes ranging from the merely unconventional to the outright bizarre.

Tantalizing Stories

First gaining notoriety in the pages of *Buzz*, *Real Stuff*, and Fantagraphics' *Jim* magazine in the late-1980's, Jim Woodring's strange meditations now grace one half of Tundra's *Tantalizing Stories*. "Frank", Woodring's protagonist, is a pantomimic, nonchalant, cartoon creature who regularly investigates the daily goings-on of the off-kilter world he inhabits. Often rudderless, he turns his attention to satiating his curiosities and engaging in some treachery and practical jokes with his malformed nemesis, Manhog.

Woodring shares the spotlight with co-contributor Mark Martin, 1992 Eisner Award nominee for *20 Nude Dancers 20*. Martin weaves the lighthearted tales of "Montgomery Wart", a precocious frog who cannot help but get himself into one fix after another, often with the reluctant aid of his faithful chums Murgatroid Toad and Cicero Buck. Martin has placed his characters on a childhood journey of first experiences, and Montgomery's reactions of impetuousness and wide-eyed fascination will delight readers of all ages.

Beer Nutz

For Bink, Luther and Humphrey, the three thirty-something adolescents in *Beer Nutz*, home is a place called Scottie's Bar, and cartoonist Wayno is the guide to their rituals of male bonding: chugging fifty-cent drafts, passing wind, and generally repulsing the female gender in true neanderthal fashion. While condoning beer drinking as a profession, Wayno managed to win accolades from his peers and critics alike, including Bob Fingerman of *Reflex* magazine who said, "*Beer Nutz* serves to remind us why comic books are called 'comic' books. It's funny...*very* funny. It is a superbly crafted comic."

Trailer Trash

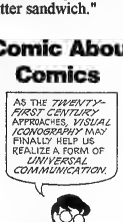
Trailer Trash unearths a slice of American culture that would perhaps be better swept under the rug. Creator Roy Tompkins introduces readers to devout redneck Harvey the Hillbilly Bastard, and his world of corndogs, Ooze brand beer, trailer park murders, and unlikely arcade games such as Burn Victim, SuperSpaz, and Ted Bundy. Behind Harvey's dull stare and buck-toothed frown lurks a brain of pure pastry. When a conspiracy masterminded by extraterrestrials stares him smack in the face, Harvey once again proves he is not the sharpest tool in the shed.

Hyena

If there are cartoonists alive with a flare for the innovative and outre, chances are they have been captured for *Hyena*. Contributions to Tundra's eclectic anthology include Japanese rubber monster-movie spoof "Ultra Klutz" by Jeff Nicholson, Penn Rose's "World of Art", "Picomobile" by French cartoonist Pic, and "The Whoosh" by Scott Musgrove, creator of Dark Horse Comics' *Fat Dog Mendoza*.

"There's something for all sensibilities," says Mark Martin. "Everything from good, clean, family fun to the comics equivalent of a broken glass-and-peanut butter sandwich."

Comic About Comics


AS THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY APPROACHES, VISUAL ICONOGRAPHY MAY FINALLY HELP US REALIZE A FORM OF UNIVERSAL COMMUNICATION.

Tundra Publishing announces the upcoming release of *Understanding Comics*, a 224-page comic book about comics by Scott McCloud. Twelve-time Harvey and Eisner Award nomi-

Harvey and Eisner Award nominee McCloud guides the reader through the hidden world of comic on a magic carpet ride that encompasses the rich history and the unseen craft that make comics the powerful art form it is.

The medium really is the message here: every single page of this book utilizes the very techniques it discusses, giving the reader an entertaining double-whammy of an education. McCloud offers a definition and a vocabulary of comics, and establishes their place in history in relationship to art and communication. In so doing, a firm basis is established through which the deeper knowledge of the medium, far beyond drawing and storytelling techniques, can be exchanged.

Regardless of the level of experience a reader brings to *Understanding Comics*, he or she will learn something new. This book sets a new high-water mark and will become a standard reference book for years to come. Exciting and challenging concepts are presented in an accessible manner, such that anyone, comic reader or not, will enjoy the book while getting an insider's look at the hidden techniques of comics. Advance review copies have sent shock waves through the creative community.

Based on the fact that there are no real limits as to whom this book can be sold, Tundra is planning a major promotional campaign that spans the entire summer. Intended to build consumer awareness of the book through Christmas, the campaign includes several convention appearances and a store tour which begins with the book's premiere party at Moondog's in Chicago, on May 8the. Advertising in trade journals and consumer publications is planned, along with several previews. Capital City's *Advance Comics, Comic Buyer's Guide, Comic Shop News, Wizard,* and *The Comics Journal* will all be giving the book special coverage; Dave Sim's *Cerebus* will present an eight-page preview, and the book is to receive plugs the letter columns of Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* and Matt Wagner's *Grendel.*

Libraries and universities have shown considerable interest in using the book to enrich communications curricula; industry professionals, retailers, and educators are seeing the book as a way to bridge the gap for those not yet attuned to the unlimited possibilities of comics. McCloud is planning a lecture tour through universities, art schools, and libraries; interested institutions should contact Ann Ivan at (413) 586-9525.

Hot Atomeka Release

Sugar Virus

On the Bargeldstrasse in Berlin, you can buy anything--for a price. This is where artists and lovers come hooked on pain and pleasure, to lose themselves in the bars and the backstreet clubs. Mixing with the bright young things and the lowlife, Cindy Ruin and the Black Crow King are among the regulars who haunt Die Risiko--they are the carriers of the Sugarvirus. These are true vampires, they carry the virus like a disease that eats the soul, feeding on the hot, metallic blood of the drop-outs and the strays. Then they find Louise, one of their own, grotesquely mutilated but still terrifyingly alive. Someone is out to destroy them. Someone who knows the ways of the vampire. Someone who senses, in the rush of fear, the ectasy of death.

Warp News

Warp Graphics "ABCD Award"

Warp Graphics is going all out to build nation-wide elf-awareness with a two-pronged retailer and reader awards program. The "ABCD Award" honors those whose efforts go "Above and Beyond the Call of Duty" to bring new readers into the world of *Elfquest.*

Warp Graphics publisher Richard Pini explained the genesis of the awards. "For fifteen years *Elfquest* has reached readers that are not typical of the average comic book audience," Pini said. "Many of *Elfquest*'s fans don't read many other comics. At the same time, there are literally millions of people who've never heard of *Elfquest*, either. ABCD is our attempt to introduce *Elfquest* to that huge, untapped market and, on the flip side, bring new readers into comics shops."

"Why 'ABCD?' The acronym just sort of hit me one day as these things do, as anyone who knows the genesis of Warp Graphics can attest," Pini explained. "Also, I remembered something a high school science teacher had said,

ages ago, about something being and 'ABCD procedure' which meant, 'Any Body Can Do.' The two slogans seemed nicely complimentary."

Readers and retailers are encouraged to submit the ideas that they've found to be most effective in attracting new readers to *Elfquest*. Each month Warp Graphics will choose one reader and on retailer from among all the submissions received from each group to be that month's ABCD reader and retailer honorees. The luck and industrious winners will each receive an engraved award plaque, special mention in all *Elfquest* titles, and a mint, autographed copy of *Fantasy Quarterly #1*, *Elfquest*'s very first appearance in 1978.

"We're looking for more than a few good suggestions," Pini said. "Warp Graphics is committed to widening the audience for *Elfquest* and for good comics in general. We're looking at 1993 not only as *Elfquest*'s fifteenth anniversary, but also the year we too go Above and Beyond the Call of Duty."

This Month's "Must Reads!"

1) *Adventures of Superman #500*/ DC

2) *WildStar #1*/ Image

3) *Cable #2*/ Marvel

4) *Raver #1*/ Malibu

5) *Dinosaurs For Hire #3*/ Malibu

6) *Purge #0*/ ANIA

7) *U.N. Force Files #1*/ Caliber

8) *Tor #1*/ Epic

9) *Ms. Mystic #1*(1993)/ Continuity

10) *Sex Warrior #1*/ Dark Horse

Comic News FLASH

Rebel News

Faustian News

It's official -- David Quinn and Tim Vigil's *Faust Act Ten* will be offered in June and July! Nine months in the making... the hottest Faust yet contains the first appearance of the Homunculous! Rebel Studios will also offer a second printing of the sold out Faust Act Nine in July (Making, by retailer request, all ten chapters available simultaneously). And, as a special "thank you" to full-service distributors, select retailers, and over 43,000 Faust readers who await each new chapter patiently, *Faust Act Ten: The Walpurgisnacht Nails* will be shipped with a very special gift.

Tim Vigil's drop dead gorgeous portrait of Claire, Faust's femme fatale -- a deluxe collector's edition -- can be yours for free. This one of a kind portfolio piece is free, shipped with every (50) fifty copies of *Faust Act Ten* purchased during the months of June and July only. (Example: a store that orders 200 gets 4, a store that orders 250 gets 5, etc.)

Distributors and Retailers -- here's your chance to satisfy your customers and profit more than ever from comics' long-shelf-life cult favorite, *Faust*. You don't have to participate -- but you have everything to gain. As always, we welcome your suggestions and questions. Talk to us.

FantaCo News

Famed illustrator Alfredo Alcala has signed with FantaCo publishing to produce Steve Niles's *Grimm's Blood* for April release. Alcala's art has graced hundreds of comics in every genre imaginable, and for the first time teams with Eisner award nominated writer Steve Niles.

"Out of the blue, Alfredo called up saying he wanted to work with us, Steve Niles had just recently completed the *Night of the Living Dead: London* co-writing chores with Clive Barker and was shopping around the *Grimm's Blood* script. We knew other publishers were looking over the project, and we, including Steve are huge fans of Alfredo's work.

FantaCo wasted no time getting behind this project. To do it right, we are putting it out in prestige format, the same as the *Night of the Living Dead* series. It's the first of a number of books we will be doing in prestige format in 1993," states publication manager Jim Whiting.

Grimm's Blood will ship in April.

Conquest News

The greatest arch villain of them all returns! Sax Rohmer's *Fu-Manchu* will join an all star line up for conquest press in '93. Conquest will be embarking on a 12 issue series featuring the adaptations of Rohmer's first three novels. Can detective Nayland Smith and Assistant Petrie once again stop the evil doctor from accomplishing his plans of world domination? Stan (*Planet of the Apes*) Timmons, Lou (*Fang*), and Sajive Fernando, will provide all the action, adventure, and mystery in Sax Rohmer's *Fu-Manchu*! Due out in March of '93!

Industry News

Shooter's First Defiant Project

Jim Shooter, having now finalized the financing of his Defiant comic company, is now planning the release of his first series: *Plasm*.

Defiant, which has financial backing from investors of the Score Card Co., is now developing a major launch that will include eight titles by the end of the year.

Plasm, which kicks off Defiant's launch, is written by Shooter, with art by David Lapham, and coloring by Janet Jackson. The first issue is scheduled for August release and will feature special color enhancements on the "plasm" material.

In the series, *Plasm* is an extra-dimensional empire where everything, including the technology, is formed from organic material. Also, since everything is "alive" -- including machinery, buildings, and clothes -- life in the *Plasm* empire doesn't hold the same value it does on Earth. In order for the empire to grow and expand, it is constantly conquering new worlds to gain raw biological materials, the same way the Roman Empire once conquered most of Europe.

The plot develops when Lorca, a warlord of the *Plasm* empire, discovers Earth and tries to genetically re-engineer 10,000 people into his own personal army. Something goes wrong in the process, however, and only five humans -- with new special powers -- survive and ban together in order to save Earth from future conquest by the *Plasm* empire.

According to Shooter, "*Plasm* is the story of five ordinary people who conquer fear, failure, and the limits of the human condition and strive against an empire."

Spawn/She-Bat Crossover

Image Comics and Continuity Graphics have announced that Todd McFarlane and Neal Adams will join forces for a crossover tale featuring McFarlane's Spawn and Adams's She-Bat.

Spawn will appear in Continuity's *She-Bat #3*, which ships in July. Sources report that it "...will be no more than just a cameo appearance."

The Valiant Validated Signature Series (VVSS)

Valiant has secured the exclusive rights to 5500 signed copies of key titles to be published in the next year, which will be packaged in a Mylar-type bag with a certificate of authenticity and an official VVSS seal, and released approximately two months after the unsigned versions. Books will be allocated among distributors based on their market shares for all Valiant books during the month in which the unsigned versions were published, and awarded to retailers at the distributors' discretion.

Six titles are currently slated for inclusion in the VVSS:

- *Rai & the Future Force #9*, signed by Sean Chen and Kathryn Bollinger;
- *Magnus: Robot Fighter #25*, signed by John Ostrander and James Brock;
- *Turok #1*, signed by Bart Sears;
- *X-O #0*, signed by Joe Quesada and Bob Layton;
- *Secret Weapons #1*, signed by Joe St. Pierre;
- *Dr. Mirage #1*, signed by Bernard Chang.

Topps Drops

Due to "significantly lower" than anticipated shipments of its sports cards, the Topps Company reported at the end of January that is would have a net loss for its fourth quarter. In reaction to the report, Topps stock dropped from a previous day closing price of 12 1/4 per share to an opening price of 8 1/2 the morning of the announcement.

"Sports card collecting will continue as long as professional sports remains popular," said Topps Chairman Arthur T. Shorin. "However, we see this development as a market contraction rather than a seasonal fluctuation. The speculative frenzy of the last few years is giving way to a hobby reflecting true collector interest, and we are positioning the Company to operate effectively and profitably going forward in this new environment."

Chekov's New Enterprise

Walter Koenig -- best known during the last 25 years for his role as Commander Pavel Chekov in the original *Star Trek* television series and theatrical films -- will be promoting his new Malibu Comics title, *Raver*, with signings at three stores across the country.

The stores will be selected by a random drawing from among stores that order 50 copies or more of *Raver #1*, which are automatically entered in the contest. Winning stores will

host Koenig either on the weekend of the comic's release (Friday, April 30 or Saturday, May 1).

DC's Bob Wayne Promoted

A recent DC Comics press release announced that Bob Wayne, former Director-Retailer Services, will "undertake a significant expansion of his responsibilities as the new Director-Direct Market Sales." In addition to overseeing DC's Retailer Services, marketing publications, conventions, and trade shows, Wayne is now charged with maintaining the relationship between DC and each of DC's Direct Market distributors.

According to Bruce Bristow (V.P.-Sales and Marketing), "There's no one better qualified to do this job than Bob, with more than five years at DC, and his background as a retailer, freelancer, convention organizer, and fanzine publisher."

Astroworld Theme Park Unveils "Batman the Escape"

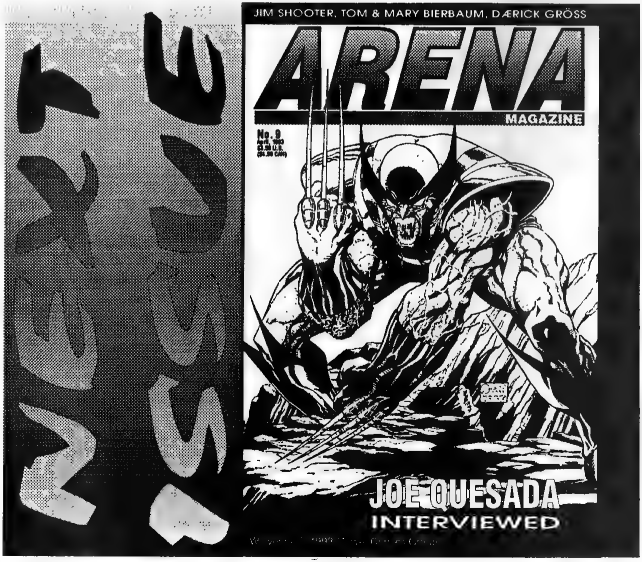
Six Flags Astroworld -- a Houston-based amusement park -- recently announced the addition of an all-new, interactive *Batman* ride to its growing list of popular Bat-attractions.

And from what we've heard, it's a doozy.

Titled "Batman: The Escape", this state-of-the-art presentation combines high technology, dramatic special effects, elaborate stage sets, and incredible sound and lighting, and is described by Six Flags Representative Debra Ford as "the most exciting attraction ever created in the 25-year history of the park, and the only attraction of its kind in the world."

The journey begins when guests duck into the Batcave, where they are greeted by a flashing computer monitor...and the Dark Knight's infamous Batmobile. Later, intrepid patrons stumble into the Penguin's enormous "Arctic Park" hideout, while also encountering a wrecked police car, a spewing fire hydrant, and (naturally) the Batman himself. Finally, a 55 mile-per-hour road trip -- through narrow tunnels, hair-pin curves, and a 360-degree loop-the-loop -- draws "Batman: The Escape" to a close, making it one of Six Flags' most unforgettable super-hero experiences.

"Batman: The Escape" is scheduled to open in late spring, 1993.



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Ask your local retailer to order *your* copy of the *Superior Seven #5* appearing in May.

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"The most unique superhero team to hit the comics scene this decade"

They're not mutants, They're not aliens. They are ordinary people forced into an extraordinary situation. Join them in their mission to overcome their inner turmoil and battle the forces that plot to destroy them.

Freak Force... You've never seen anything like it.

Mini series premiers with issue # -4 in July

ASK FOR IT!

COMICS NOW

by Jerry Smith

Eclipse Comics Parts Unknown by Smith, Gorby & Clark.

The series of the month this month has to be *Parts Unknown* from Eclipse Comics. *Parts Unknown* is a four-part science fiction miniseries by Beau Smith and Brad Gorby. As the cover copy states, the ugly, ill-natured aliens have "come to Earth ... to get under your skin!" Yes, they've come not only to impersonate us by grafting human skin over their reptilian hides, but also to take over the earth and to breed with human females. Kind of like Bill Clinton.

The very human cops that blunder in on this operation are the immensely likable hot-shot Pendleton Spurr and his gutsy female partner Maria Lucci. Both recovering alcoholics, Spurr and Lucci team to fight malicious aliens and the constant need for a drink.

The Spurr/Lucci team is one of the most successful parings in comics. Kind of like a comic book *Moonlighting*, they playfully fight each other while dispatching the evil lizard-ETs. When Lucci is abducted by the aliens for knowing too much, Spurr throws away his badge and finds his old gang of downtown cronies to help him invade the aliens' stronghold and embark on some major destruction. In a gratifying conclusion, Spurr's gang (plus an angry, armed, and rescued Lucci) teach the aliens what happens when you come to Earth and mess with cops. American cops. Haven't they seen any *Lethal Weapon* movies?

In the end, the talents of Beau Smith and Brad Gorby make *Parts Unknown*. The series is worth the purchase price for Brad Gorby's knock-out art alone. The man can draw, especially beautiful women. Beau Smith has a way of making his dialogue funny without making it corny. In issue #3, when Maria remarks, "This is like something out of a bad B-movie," to the head alien, we the readers laughingly agree. But not in a negative sense. This comic could easily be a caricature of a thousand '50s sci-fi movies. Thanks to Smith and Gorby, it isn't.

Fortunately, the last issue of *Parts Unknown* leaves the story wide open for a sequel. This series is one of the few comics worthy of one.

Someday, some curious grad student will write their doctorate on why the vampire has taken such a deep root on our collective psyche. For the last hundred and fifty years, and sporadically before that, there have been vampire stories, legends and novels. In the last hundred years, we've had a slew of vampire movies, comics, and "nonfiction" books about Vlad Dracul and his fanged ilk. Why does the tale of the vampire, with all its rules and variations of the legend that come with each new story, hold us spellbound as a society? I suspect it has something to do with the vampire's dichotomy of being immortal and powerful, yet being helpless to control his repulsive actions. Or the fact that at the core of his or her being, the vampire is evil, even if the person infected with the curse is not.

Since I have a favorable inclination toward vampire tales, Atomeka Press' *Sweetmeats* did not disappoint. Even the cover of this book is tantalizing. It features a teenage girl with short hair, dressed in a tight tube top and cut-off jean shorts, rubbing her bloody, outstretched hand down a white wall, leaving a red trail as thick as a paint roller. Short fangs stick out from under

Atomeka's Sweet Meat.

her upper lip.

It only gets better. The story in *Sweetmeats* reveals the girl on the cover is Linda Crosby. She's sixteen and has been in a mental institution for ten years. She committed a brutal (if not undeserving to the victim) act when she was six years old and has been under state care ever since. Doctor Jane Page, a new psychologist working on Linda's case, becomes instantly bonded with her. Although she can't figure out some of Linda's odd behavior, especially her predilection for blood, Dr. Page likes her and really wants to help cure her mental problems.

Over the course of therapy, Linda and Dr. Page become bonded more and more closely. Dr. Page's superior, Dr. Koenig, and they butt heads often about how much time and attention Dr. Page is giving Linda. A violent act and a suicide attempt brings Linda and Dr. Page's relationship to a head. Then, in a shocking plot twist, Linda commits another vicious vampiric act. Dr. Page ultimately has to decide what to do with her friend (and now lover) Linda. Does she try to cover for her? Or consign her forever to the red tape of the system? The answer is surprising, but the ending does set the stage for more gut-wrenching stories.

Sweetmeats is co-plotted by Steve Tanner and Pete Venters and drawn by Pete Venters. A word of warning; this book is for mature readers only. The story deals with mature themes and features bloody and explicit violence. The content isn't for everyone, but mature vampire fans should not miss it.

Marvel Comics Incredible Hulk: Future Imperfect.

Moving on to superheroes, be sure to check out *The Incredible Hulk: Future Imperfect*, by Peter David and George Perez. It's a Prestige Format book, which means the price is going to run higher than a normal comic or annual (it's $5.95US per issue), but this two issue miniseries is worth every penny.

In *Future Imperfect*, the Hulk is approached by a gang of ratty teenagers and coerced into going to his own future, their present. They live in a future where a malevolent dictator called the Maestro rules the world. The Maestro is big and ugly, with green skin and a gray beard. The tyrant has killed all of Earth's heroes, and he lives a life of decadence and pleasure off of his unwilling subjects.

The Hulk, repulsed by the Maestro's actions, readily agrees to help the rebels who plucked him from the timestream. He and the Maestro meet, and of course the Maestro tries to turn the Hulk to the dark side of the Force--whoops, sorry, wrong story. Maestro does try to enlist the Hulk's aid in ruling the planet, but the Hulk refuses, rather violently.

You can guess what's coming. Yes, the Maestro is a future version of the Hulk, a version who decided that having unlimited amounts of strength and power were useless if one wasn't master of all he surveyed. So he killed everyone who stood in his way and took over. The Hulk from the past, sickened by his future self, vows to bring his reign to an end.

With *Future Imperfect*, Peter David proves yet again why he is one of the finest of the current crop of comics writers. His plots always contain a perfect blend of passion, humor, plot twists, and subtle story nuances. For example, he captures the perfect essence of a character as powerful as the Hulk turning evil. You've heard "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely?" That was written about the Maestro. He takes what he wishes from the native population; food, women, and slaves, with the contempt of one who believes he deserves to be worshipped. David's most brilliant touch to the book is the trophy room the Maestro has created to showcase the artifacts of Earth's greatest (former) heroes. Due to George Perez's minutely detailed artwork, readers can spend an hour or so picking out the pieces of familiar costumes and weapons. See how long it takes you to spot Cambot from *Mystery Science Theater 3000* amongst articles such as Captain America's shield, Magneto's helmet, and Wolverine's skeleton.

This book not only contains multitudes of clever in-jokes, as a whole it's one of the finest comic stories published this year.

For slam-bang superhero action, there's no better place to go these days than an Image comic. Unfortunately, for an intelligent, coherent story, there's no worse place to go than an Image comic.

Cyberforce by Image Comics

The transgressor this month is artist Marc Silvestri's *Cyberforce #2*, with script by Eric Serge Silvestri. In a story that was very influenced by Jim Lee's *WildC.A.T.S* (innocent "mutant" girl fought over by two opposing groups), Silvestri serves up a beautifully drawn comic, that, for all its action, can't avoid being dull.

Like all of the Image artists before him, Marc Silvestri does the finest artwork of his career on *Cyberforce*. His *X-Men* and *Wolverine* work was serviceable, but *Cyberforce* leaves those two titles in the dust. Also, like most of the Image comics, readers need a scorecard to tell all of the characters apart. By the time you've figured out who's who, you've gone on to the latest issue of *Green Arrow*. It might only take thirty seconds to read, but at least you can figure out who all the characters are.

Cyberforce seems to introduce fifty new characters, and they all look alike. After reading names like "Killjoy," "Ballistic," "Impact," and "Velocity," I wondered if I was reading about superheroes or a list of products of a new car company. I hope they run out of these things soon. What's the matter with calling a hero "Joe," or "Marty?" If I see one more idiot named "Piledriver" with four arms and metal armor waving a huge gun, I'm going to scream.

In my opinion, there are just too many characters in Silvestri's story. The characters in *Cyberforce* look exactly like the characters in *WildC.A.T.S*, who look exactly like the characters in *Youngblood*. Can't someone break this vicious cycle?

Finally, a brief recommendation for the recently published *Superman Gallery* from DC comics. This comic, printed on slick, color paper, is a showcase of Superman art through the ages. Featured are *Man of Steel* covers and pinups by such comic book luminaries as Joe Shuster, Neal Adams, Moebius, Walt Simonson, John Byrne, Todd McFarlane, Bernie Wrightson, Steve Rude, and Jim Steranko. The book even has promotional art from a 1947 Kellogg's ad featuring Superman, and art from the Fleischer Studios *Superman* cartoons, the greatest cartoons ever made. This comic is a wonderful exhibition of Superman art over the last fifty-five years.

Superman Gallery by DC Comics

FEMALE TROUBLE

SEEKER

SEEKER VENGENCE #1 JULY '93
Joe Martin \ Willie Peppers \ Allen Freema

SKY COMICS

MORGANA X

MORGANA X SPECIAL #1 JUNE '93
Quinton Hoover \ Allen Freeman

A Conversation With ... Roger STern

(Continued from last issue.)
Interview conducted
by Jerry Smith

Last month we left off talking to Roger Stern about his upcoming plans for the *Superman* titles and the new characters that would be inhabiting them. This month we finish up by finding out how Roger plans to relax after killing off The Man of Steel, and what else he's doing with his time.

Arena Magazine: *Getting away from Superman just a second, what else are you working on right now, and what are you enjoying reading?*

Stern: Aside from *Superman*, I'm not really working on anything else right now. There's the *Green Lantern Quarterly* stuff which we're in the middle of changing artists... I'm not sure what's happening there at this moment. That was my only other regular assignment. I'm going to take it a little easy around the end of the year, I won't have a big deadline crunch because I finished my last issue of *Action Comics*. So I'm going to take an extra week off at Christmas this year. That, plus I'm getting all sorts of requests for story signings, with the Death of Superman going, and DC is doing a benefit tour early in December, and sending me and some other folks down to Florida and Louisiana to do some benefit appearances at comic shops which suffered loses during the hurricanes. They came to me with this and I said, this is too nice a thing to do, I can't turn this thing down.

Arena: *Any work at Marvel?*

Stern: Well, I did an issue of *X-Men* which still hasn't come out. I have no idea when it's coming out. I did this because all the *X-Men* books were so late and they needed stories and this is something a little different for the *X-Men*. It's a one-issue story, it has a beginning, middle, and end, and brings back a classic character who hasn't been seen for a long time.

Arena: *An end? I'll believe that when I see it.*

Roger. Stern: It actually explains some of the harder to understand sections of about a year's worth of *X-Men*, so I think it would be nice if it came out.

Arena: *One more Marvel oriented question that's been bothering me for years. Who was Hobgoblin?*

Stern: Well, he wasn't Ned Leeds, I'll tell you that. He was certainly not Ned Leeds. In fact, the really interesting thing to me is that the way his background was explained, he couldn't possibly have been Ned Leeds, because when they told Ned's death in flashback, it was like three guys in jumpsuits that the Foreigner sent to kill him, jumped in and killed him. Except that these were normal guys and the real Hobgoblin was as strong as Spider-Man. So if Ned had actually been the Hobgoblin, those guys would have been red-faced and he wouldn't have been killed. Therefore, he couldn't have possibly been Hobgoblin. The fellow that I had planned to be Hobgoblin is still out there. Nothing has been done with him. So as far as I'm concerned, he's still the real, original Hobgoblin. He set Ned up, and he's just sitting back and eventually he'll get really annoyed at the pseudo- Hobgoblins that have taken over in his stead, and go wipe them out and take over again. I've made the offer to [*Spider-Man* editor] Danny Fingeroth, I said I have a storyline, a four to six-issue story arc to do in any of the *Spider-Man* books, or as a special miniseries, and I've had two or three artists who have been connected with *Spider-Man* who want to do it, so whenever they're ready I've got the story. But it's up to Marvel to decide they want to do it.

Arena: *Not going to let that identity out of the bag for now?*

Stern: No, it will come out in the story if they ever let me do it.

This interview was conducted in November, 1992.

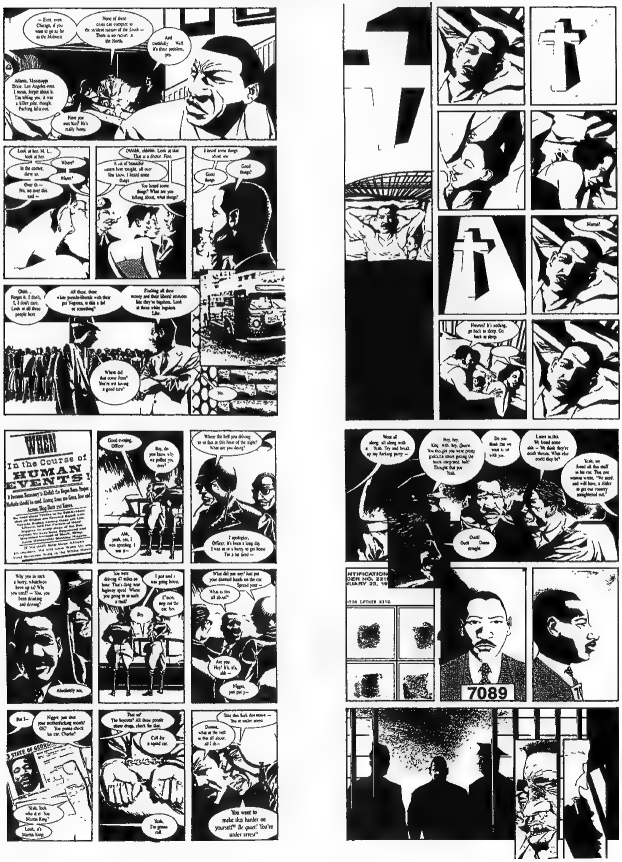
Fan illustration by Bob Kelly.

PREVIEW

KING

By Ho Che Anderson

Published by Fantagraphics Books



BRIT BITS

News and gossip from across the ocean by Paul H.Birch

First off, an update on the Graham Marks/Richard Elson mini-series mentioned last issue as coming from Marvel UK - It transpires that when the project was looked at again, after five months preparatory work had been undertaken they decided not to run with the project after all! For those interested in something no longer to see the light of day, the project concerned a murderous alien coming to Earth and discovering the ambiguities of emotions via a female who befriended him. He would haved interacted with the Marvel Universe, initially by meeting The Hulk. The character originally had the name of Obsidian, until it was pointed out that a member of DC's *Infinity, Inc.* bore that moniker; Viridian was subsequently chosen - which sounds like a cheap perfume in my opinion, but of course none of this matters now.

Elson who'd initially turned down some lucrative work in the commercial art world and comic material for Fleetway Editions to do the project is surprisingly not too despondent about the situation. However this could be justified seeing he'll be paid for his character designs, and is in the running for two new mini-series edited by Tim Quinn, one of which Marks may write.

Miracleman artist, Mark Buckingham has now decided only to do pencils on the series, and that part of the job's what he'll be doing on *Immortalis* for Marvel UK, as well as inks for the covers. *Warheads* and *Nightbreed* writer, Nicholas Vince will be turning in the scripts, thus uniting the previous and current chairmen of the Society of Strip Illustration on this fourissue mini-series provisionally scheduled for summer release.

"Immortalis is the story of a man who does a deal with Mephisto," relates Buckingham. "He gives him his soul to spare some villagers back in the thirteenth century and finds himself immortal as a result. We relate events from his past, although there is an ongoing linear narrative of things happening in the present with guest-stars like Dr. Strange (used in coordination with Marvel US editor, Mike Rockwitz), Spitfire and Baron Blood."

If not out yet, look for *Firkin the Cat #7* from American publisher, Last Gasp collecting material from the Tym Manley/Hunt Emerson strip that's been running in the men's magazine, Fiesta over here for the past twelve years. It's printed in the USA then British editions are sent over here for co-publisher Knockabout, who brought out the reprint anthology *R.Crumb Draws the Blues* at the close of '92, and will be releasing UK editions of the Gilbert Shelton's latest *Furry Freak Bros.* and *Fat Freddy's Cat* soon.

Knockabout's major cartoonist, Hunt Emerson, whose work was both on and between the covers of Marvel Epic's *Alvol. II #1* has in recent years been working on adapting classic literature.

"We started with *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and that proved to be a success both artistically and commercially," Emerson says of the D.H. Lawrence book, adding "It's published in six languages now; English, Spanish, Swedish, Finnish, French, and Portuguese for Brazil, where they also have a Book Club edition."

He followed it with Samuel Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which has thus far only seen Finnish and English book editions, but there should be healthy worldwide interest in his current work,

Casanova.

"It's 96 pages and we're going to do it as three comicbooks first and then as an album," he reveals. "It's structured into twelve chapters, three chapters an issue.

"I've invented a story about the end of Casanova's life and in the course of the story he refers back over his life. I've taken those incidents from his memoirs, some of the actual dialogue is taken direct from him.

"Doing the research was fascinating. People just tend to think of the sex thing but there was a lot more to him than that. For a start, his sex life was finished by the time he was forty and he lived to seventy-six! At the end of his life, he lived in a castle in Bavaria as a librarian, but that was more or less because he was washed up, having been made persona non grata in pretty well every country in Europe!"

Look for some detailed period artwork within this 'funny book' of an "adventurer, charlatan and hustler".

With the ever increasing coverage of American wrestling on our TV's and Valiant's comics still being stocked on newsstands, Fleetway Editions brought out *Johnny Cougar's Wrestling Monthly* at the tail end of '92. This reprints strips from the sixties that appeared in the boys comic anthology, *Tiger*. Cougar's an American Indian wrestler who got up to assorted adventures outside the ring and in. His strips ran at two and a half pages, with the other half being used as advertisement space for confectionery or such like, and in *Cougar's Wrestling Monthly* they've been given over to gag cartoons.

Odyssey the much discussed junior version of *2000AD* from Fleetway, is still being looked at after at least eighteen months planning before being scheduled, and will most likely go through a final name change.

Up in Dundee, Scottish publisher D.C. Thomson, who were around before World War II, broke out and continue to dominate children's humor comics with the likes of *The Dandy* and *The Beano* appear to be having a few setbacks due to the economy's recession, for, if my sources are correct, there have been voluntary redundancies at the firm. Fleetway Editions have *Oh, No*, a comic promised to rival Thomson's variety, but who knows if that's a contributory reason, as Scotland's finest and are traditionally low-key, publicity wise. Nevertheless, Thomson's apparent success with the *Bucky O'Hare* reprint comic (the cartoon series is currently on Saturday morning TV) may have influenced them to go ahead with a science fiction comic for five to nine year olds.

By the time you read this you may also know about Malibu's new imprint, Rock It Comics which will be official rockographies concerning assorted stadium-gigging six-string metal merchants; and Malibu seem keen to work with British creators on these books.

Michael Carey, who did some work for both Neptune's Apocalypse and Trident Lines, scripted the diary of that madman of rock, Ozzy Osbourne. Much to my chagrin, I wasn't the first person in my home city of Birmingham to know about this one. Paying a visit to the city's premiere comic shop, Nostalgia & Comics (also editorial offices of Wolf Publishing's *The Phantom* comic), I was told Black Sabbath bass guitarist, Geezer Butler had spilled the beans it just before me when he went in to pick up his comics!

Dave Kendall who drew Psycho Killer to Pat Mills' scripts in *Toxic!* and has done *Necroscope* illustrations for author, Brian Lumley, popped along to see Metallica on their last British tour, and chatted to drummer, Lars Ulrich about the artistic approach the group were looking for Kendall's to follow-up work hedid for Malibu by drawing their *Metallica* comic.

Malibu/Rock It Comics have also contacted another British writer about a Megadeth comic.

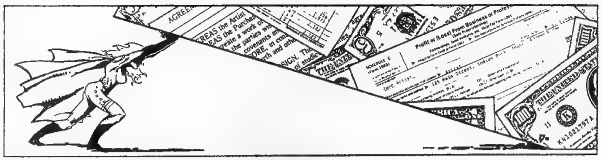
If getting Alan Moore to do work published by Malibu/Image wasn't enough of a coup, my sources tell me yet another commercially popular writer from these shores is set to do work for the company. More news as we get it!

PREVIEW

CHEVAL NOIR: SUBURBAN NIGHTMARES

By Michael Cherkas and Larry Hancock

Published by Dark Horse Comics



Getting Into The BUSINESS Of Comics

by Lurene Haines

Part 3: Approaching Potential Employers: ***Step One - Conventions, Feedback and Making Introductions.***

Last column I laid the groundwork for preparing a professional portfolio. This month we'll look at ways to apply that portfolio.

There are a variety of ways to approach potential employers. These can include sending in samples by mail, hitting the pavement in search of a personal interview with the publisher/editor of choice, and attending conventions. This time around we'll concentrate on making use of conventions in the search for work. I'll discuss introducing yourself to publishers and editors, the business etiquette involved in showing your work, and how to use their feedback to improve your chances. To get started, however, it is imperative to understand the importance of attending conventions.

The Convention Circuit

In our industry we are fortunate to have an extensive convention circuit. By convention circuit, I mean a variety of events, featuring comic content, held throughout the year and around the country (and the world!). A local sponsor organizes a show of comics (and comic-related material), the sellers, the publishers and the creators. These shows are open to the public and frequented by fans of the genre, collectors, and curiosity-seekers. The convention sponsors charge a range of entrance fees for attending these events contingent on a variety of factors. These can include size, duration, numbers of retailers and professionals attending, and the level of 'stardom' of the guest professionals.

Conventions are held everywhere, and range dramatically in size. For the purposes of simplicity, and because this publication targets North American audiences, I will concentrate on information specific to the United States.

Your town or city may be the site of many different conventions throughout the year, or they may be held only occasionally. In the U.S. there are a variety of well-known conventions held each year. Some of the larger, more established conventions include HerosCon held in Charlotte, North Carolina twice a year, Great Eastern's New York show in January, and Wondercon held in Oakland, California every spring. The Chicago Comicon held in Chicago every July and the San Diego Comicon that usually runs in August are the two largest shows in the U.S. in terms of attending professionals. In addition, there are shows in many other major cities, including Atlanta and Dallas. As you can see by this list, there are major conventions representing most geographic areas of the country.

Anatomy of a Convention

Most conventions are structured similarly, despite any special events that may be scheduled. There are usually four main components to any convention; the dealer/retailers room, the publisher's area, the guest area/artists alley, and panels and displays.

1. The Retailers

There is usually an area designated for retailers (the guys who sell the goods). These are important people. They represent the customers who will ultimately buy your product. It is vital to keep in mind that they are a crucial component in your employment. They ultimately decide which product to order from the distributors and publishers. Cultivating a positive and friendly relationship with the retailer ensures that your latest project will be remembered when ordering time rolls around.

2. The Publishers

Depending on the size of the function, there may be representatives from a few or most of the comic publishers in our industry. The Publishers set up display areas to promote their latest properties, and provide sneak previews of upcoming projects. They also structure their convention time to consider work from newcomers, and often will be on the lookout for new talent while attending a show.

In the case of our largest convention, the San Diego Comicon, it is unusual for a publisher not to attend. For that reason the larger shows, despite their greater cost to attend, are often the best places to search out employment.

3. The Creators

Most shows use a 'name' creator as a drawing card for the public. Sometimes they bring in guests who are the latest hot talent, and sometimes the guest is a popular favorite who's been around for years. Depending on the size of the function, there can be one or two main guests or, in the case of the much larger shows like Chicago and San Diego, there may be a whole flotilla of big names present. Some will be guests of the show, and some will simply be appearing as part of their own self-promotion and to maintain contact with their readers.

Creators can offer some very valuable insight into the business. Long-established pros have a wealth of useful information and valuable advice. Their input can be very helpful to a newcomer.

4. Panel Discussions and Displays

Many conventions offer a variety of programming events. Some conventions combine sports memorabilia, science fiction/horror, gaming, or media (ie., movies, T.V., video, genre magazines) as part of their presentation. Whatever the content, many cons offer programming in the form of *panel discussions*. These generally feature authorities (and I use this term loosely!) on the topic of discussion, who present information, discuss it among themselves, and answer questions from the audience. Panel members can include publishers, editors, creators, and knowledgeable fans. Panels are valuable tools for the newcomer. Since topics range anywhere from entertainment to the business of the business, they can be a precious source of information and insight. They can also provide an open forum for questioning individuals who might not otherwise be accessible. Learn to listen carefully; much useful information is available.

Displays at conventions can mean a variety of things. They can take the form of an art gallery displaying originals from attending and non-attending professional. It can mean an exhibit of memorabilia. It can also mean a demonstration by a creator. Check out what is offered by the convention programming, and don't spend your whole time dogging the heels of a potential employer. There's a lot to be learned on the road to becoming a professional, and the more useful information you can find, the better you'll be at your job.

No matter the size, frequency or structure of conventions in your area, however, one thing is abundantly clear: **attending a convention is one of the most important methods of securing work in the comic industry.** Many established professionals will tell you just how critical attending industry shows can be. A friend of mine - a relative newcomer to the field of professional inking - for many years resisted attending any large convention because he balked at the cost of travel. He was having a lot of trouble acquiring work in the industry despite an aggressive strategy of sending samples to the publishers. Finally after much nagging and convincing, he relented and decided to attend the San Diego Comicon. It was the best decision he could have made. Within the first day of displaying his work at the show, and shopping it around to various publishers, he had scored one of the biggest jobs of his - or any other pro's - career! Many of his established contemporaries were jealous of his coup, but one thing is certain; he would have never gotten the job if he hadn't been at the convention, in person, promoting his work.

For many aspiring professionals, it's also unfeasible to make the trip to a publisher, let alone trying to secure an appointment time to show your work. Because of the way editors structure their time at conventions, this provides an ideal opportunity to show your work. It can save you the expense of an unannounced (and likely wasted) trip to the

ProFiles

Professional: Barbara Kesel - Managing Editor, Dark Horse Comics
Credits Include: Editor for *Aliens: Genocide*, *Aliens: Hive*, *Star Wars: Dark Empire*, Rick Geary's *Blanche Goes To New York*, and trafficker for *John Byrne's NextMen*, all with Dark Horse Comics; freelance writer on *Hawk and Dove*, DC Comics; Editor on *New Teen Titans* and *The Watchmen*, DC Comics.
Current Projects: The '93-'94 Dark Horse Comics Schedule, *John Byrne's NextMen* and Rick Geary's sequel, *Blanche Goes To Hollywood* all from Dark Horse Comics.
Question: Do you think conventions can help aspiring professionals? What advice can you offer?

I feel they play a very important role as long as newcomers don't make the most critical error in comics: "Never expect an editor from any comic book company appearing at a convention to carry home anything that you bring along to give to them." If you're an artist, bring a physical portfolio of your work to show. If you have copies you want to give out, send them separately to the office. Do not hand them to the editor. If you're a writer, the editor will probably not have time to read a story at the convention. Simply meet them, say hello, get them to establish your face with a pleasant personality (also, please bring deodorant, please wear it, and please bathe daily!) and ask them if you can send something to them at the office to review. It is, and always has been, easier for an artist to break into the industry than a writer. Anyone can look at a page of art and see right away if there's personality and character to the work being done, in addition to skills and talent. But you can't look at a page of script and tell if it's a good story or not. You have to spend more time on it. For a writer, often the best thing you can do at a convention is to hook up with an artist and produce at least a low-level story for something like a fanzine, just so you can work your way through the mechanics of writing a script for someone else to interpret visually.

I also think it's important for each person, no matter what their specific interest (a colorer, a letterer, whatever they want to do) to have a concrete idea in mind of what role they want in the comic industry. I prefer to have somebody ask something specific like, "Hi! Can I work at the mailroom at Dark Horse?" Most everyone comes up and says, "Hi! I want a job at Dark Horse!" Well, good! Good for you! So does everybody else! I don't want to hear, "How do I get a job at Dark Horse?", but more like, "I have the following background; I've studied story structure in English. I've written the following things: reviews, short stories, novels, plays, fiction, letters to the editor. I've studied art. What do I need to know to draw professionally?" Let us know who you are, what your skills consist of and what your background and training are. Then ask, "What else do I need? What can I do to make myself a viable candidate for what you do?"

The bigger companies use a lot of interns. They have programs where they draw people in at the bottom, and kind of work them up through the system, training them as they go. Some of the mid-range companies, like us, have a lot of people employed, but they tend to all be very specialized jobs. I only have one general assistant in editorial here at Dark Horse. Everyone else has some sort of editorial experience. They're either full editors or on the verge of working their way up. But they all have a publishing or magazine background. Almost nobody came to us cold. So, I'm not interested in employing some fan for any kind of staff position, nor as a writer or artist. I'm interested in hiring someone with the background necessary to draw them into the field they want, and the potential to push it as hard as they can and do as well as possible.

I think " Come focused" is the most important thing. I'd rather have someone come up and ask me two well thought out questions and disappear than monopolize my afternoon to the detriment of everyone else. Other fans are not there to listen to you ask every question you need to know to set your life in order. Any professional is likely to get a little impatient with somebody who begins to monopolize their time.

But do feel free to ask questions. It's okay to ask "What does an editor do?" You'll get a different answer every time. But the common description tends to be; read scripts, make assignments of writers and artist, and put the package together. At some companies it can start with contacting freelancers and negotiating contracts. Other companies start with an assignment where you're told, "Here is your story. Here is your creative team. Just traffic it." So you could try asking every person that you run into what their job's like. That will give you an idea of what working for each of the companies would be like. And where you'd be most interested in working - both as staff and as a freelancer. As a freelancer, you might want a relationship where you have a steady paycheck on a monthly book. That's one way of working. You also might want to have complete creative control and freedom, and work on your own schedule. Well, Marvel and DC Comics are going to be more receptive to the first type and less to the second.

But of course, *no one* passes over good work. Good work gets followed. Good work gets noticed.

publisher's city, or the aggravation of being on a 'wait list' for a portfolio review time. Plus, it provides you the opportunity to approach more than one publisher at a time.

Besides showing your work, a convention provides another critical element to getting work in the industry: **networking**. Forgive the 'biz-speak', but networking is the best way to describe this all-important function conventions provide. This is the opportunity to socialize, make contacts, introduce yourself and, finally, familiarize yourself with the way things are done in the industry. The more knowledgeable you are as a newcomer, the more respect you'll gain, and the more likely you'll be considered for work over other newcomers.

Attending the Convention

The first consideration before you attend a convention is to ensure that your portfolio is prepared and that you are well stocked with sample sheets and business cards. Then, before you head out, prepare a strategy. Consider the length of the show, which potential employers will be attending, who you would like to approach for work consideration, which professionals you'd like to meet and talk with, and any programming events you are interested in attending. Don't plan to spend the whole time chasing down one elusive lead. Set aside time - keeping in mind the schedules of the publishers and editors - to pursue prospective work, and then use the rest of the time for looking, listening and 'networking' (also called 'schmoozing' in more casual circles).

A good strategy is to take a little extra time to look through the program book, if possible, before the convention begins. This will help you organize your time more effectively. Once the doors are opened, try to avoid that big rush to the most popular location. The crowds will thin out a bit as time passes, and you can have a more leisurely conversation with your target employer or pro. Then, consider following these steps:

1. Find out Portfolio Review Times

Your first stop should be to check with each publisher to see when they have scheduled portfolio reviews. Introduce yourself, explain who you are (briefly!), leave a sample sheet and business card, and then plan to come back during the scheduled review time. Whatever you do, **DON'T, DON'T, DON'T**! expect that publisher to make a special exception for you, no matter how friendly they may seem. Portfolio reviews are scheduled for two reasons: 1) to allow the publisher time to do their usual business - promoting books, lining up new projects, and meeting the readership - while still taking time to consider newcomers, and 2) to

ProFiles

Professional: Marc Hempel - Owner of Insight Studios. Writer, Artist, Cartoonist, Painter
Credits Include: *Breathtaker*, DC Comics. *Gregory* and *Gregory II*, Piranha Press. *Hellraiser #20*, "The Girl In The Peephole"
Current Projects: *Gregory III* and *Gregory IV*, Piranha Press. *Sandman: The Kindly Ones* - 6 issues, DC Comics.
Question: How do you feel about the part conventions play in getting into the comics business?

I think conventions offer a great opportunity for young artists to have their work seen and critiqued by professionals. Working pros can point out their strengths and weaknesses and help steer them in the right direction. It's also important that less experienced artists carefully inspect original comic pages in order to take note of the various working techniques and materials employed by the pro.

In today's sea of bland and imitative artists, it's crucial that newcomers find their own honest, unique style. They need to draw from their own heart and soul and be inspired by their own feelings and experiences as opposed to simply copying the work of other comic book artists. They should throw themselves into their artwork as completely as possible (without getting ink stains on their shirts!). To this purpose, conventions are an opportunity to see how similarly artists work in terms of drawing style - and they also offer a chance to view the work of mavericks who are breaking away stylistically. Meeting and talking with any working professional can be very enlightening.

I would stress that when showing samples, artists should make their work presentable - using the correct materials. If possible - and show only their very best pieces (not the stuff dating back five years to Junior High!). It's also very important that they include actual comic pages in order to demonstrate their ability with sequential storytelling. Pin-ups are relatively useless.

Plus, at the larger conventions, virtually everyone shows up and you just can't beat that for contacts. Also the in-person experience can often be much more persuasive and effective in getting work. It's much easier to be rejected or ignored through the mail.

The most important thing to remember when going to a convention, especially for less experienced artists, is: "Leave your ego at the door!" I sometimes encounter very talented people who have more ego and ambition than willingness to learn, and they don't take criticism very well. Without an open mind and the proper attitude their chance of success is greatly diminished.

A panel from "*The Girl In The Peephole*" in **Hellraiser #20**, Epic Comics.

ensure that the publisher will have time to consider your portfolio seriously without extraneous interruptions or distractions. It's in your best interests to make use of this uninterrupted time to guarantee that the publisher can concentrate on your portfolio.

If the publisher has not scheduled a portfolio review time, and doesn't seem too busy, then ask if you can show your work. If everything goes well, you can display your portfolio and make inquiries about prospective employment. If the publisher puts you off, try to pin them down on a specific time - at their convenience! - to return for a review. If they are still vague or noncommittal, take the time to check back regularly (but not obsessively or annoyingly) during the show until they can make time. If the publisher appears interested, but seems swamped with interruptions and distractions, ask for a specific time to show your work, when you can talk uninterrupted. If they are receptive, suggest lunch, coffee, or just a five minute break away from the melee at their booth or table. If the publisher is agreeable, your in luck. But try not to take advantage of your good fortune - or misconstrue it's meaning. Be businesslike and attentive. The publisher will be pleased that their opinion matters to you, that you were businesslike and friendly, and will remember your meeting for future contacts. If, on the other hand, the publisher seems uninterested, and will not set aside any special time to review your work, then stop by periodically to see when the crowds subside, so that you can have their captive attention.

2. Professional Critiques

Take time to approach pros appearing at the show for feedback on your work. They aren't interested in hiring you, but they are often willing to provide you with constructive feedback on your samples. Make sure you wait for a moment when they aren't inundated with people - signing, doing artwork, conversing with attendees - before you approach them for a critique. The same advice applies here as with the publishers. If the pro is distracted, they won't be able to give your work the full attention it deserves. Choose your times carefully to make the best use of their time.

Critiques of your work by established professionals can be very valuable. Don't be anxious. Most pros will be honest. They are comfortably secure in their work, and won't feel threatened by a potential newcomer. If your work has strengths, you'll hear about them. You'll hear about the weaknesses, too. If you present your work to an established pro for critique, be prepared for just that. Although they aren't interested in hiring you, they do remember what it was like getting started. Most pros are eager to help any newcomer who is prepared to work at both the business and their craft. But help takes on a variety of forms, and here, it will be (hopefully) a constructive review of your portfolio and/or samples. Listen carefully to their critique, you can even make notes if it'll help you remember, and absorb any useful information on improving your skills. Keep in mind they are *established pros*. That means that they've used the skills they're trying to impart to *you* to gain employment in this industry. That should be some indicator of the validity of their comments. On the other hand, keep in mind that people can make mistakes. If a suggestion or comment seems too far off base, or confuses you, consider a second opinion. After the convention is over, review everything you've learned from both the creators and publishers. Disregard anything you deem not useful, and extract that information that will best help you pursue work in the industry.

3. Panels and displays

Frequently panels are made up of publishers and creators in the comic industry. The number of panel topics is infinite. Review your program information, and choose panels with subjects you think will be useful, or which feature professionals from whom you hope to gain insight. Try to attend the panel with some questions planned which are related to the topic. During the panel listen carefully, and pay attention to any information that can help you in your quest for employment. Feel free to ask questions, but keep in mind that there is an established topic, and that this is a public forum. Other members of the audience are unlikely to have interest in your unrelated personal inquiries.

Also, take time to attend any pertinent displays set up at the convention. If there is an Art Show, make a point of going. If there is a

large body of professional work, it will give you an opportunity to examine the work of established pros - allow you to look at techniques, methods and mediums. If there are many works by nonprofessionals, consider it a learning experience. Examine the work for strengths and weaknesses, and compare these to your own samples. It will give you an idea of what kind of talent you're competing with for employment.

4. Socializing

Although this aspect may be somewhat limited for a nonprofessional, take advantage of any opportunities to mix with publishers and professionals. Frequently major distributors or retailers, and even publishers, will host social functions that enable general attendees to socialize with established pros. If events of this nature are offered, don't hesitate to attend. Make sure you bring a good supply of business cards, and a small notepad. But don't bring your portfolio! This is a social event. Make contacts, introduce yourself, hand out business cards, get information, but let the poor pros enjoy some downtime. If you're just itching to show your wares to a particular target, then introduce yourself, explain your interest, and schedule convention time to bring your samples by. But use the social event for just that - socializing.

This is an excellent opportunity for a newcomer. Very few newcomers realize the value of 'pressing the flesh'. To meet someone on a social level provides you with an opportunity to make an impression outside the convention crowds. You'll become a face with a name, rather than one of the anonymous masses.

Some very important points:

- If you're short on social skills (have trouble carrying your end of a conversation, that sort of thing) then take time before attending an event to prepare a couple of questions and/or comments that you can use as an icebreaker. Familiarize yourself with the professionals and publishers at the convention, so that if an opportunity to talk presents itself, you have some information you can use to open the conversation. Questions about their interests, current projects, how they work, past work history; these are good openers. Just remember; most people love to talk about themselves. A good, interested listener is valuable. Also, you can make a great contact - even friendship - that could help you down the road, professionally.
- If you see a professional you're just dying to talk to, but they're already engrossed in a conversation or otherwise distracted - DO NOT INTERRUPT OR HOVER!! I cannot emphasize enough how annoying this social faux-pas can be. If you just have to talk to them, fine. Keep half an eye on them, and when they are finished, or there is an appropriate moment, then wander over and introduce yourself. Otherwise, wait until the next event or con day. A negative impression of your meeting can carry even more weight in consideration of future work possibilities.
- If you've managed to start up a conversation, but there is a lull, or apparent disinterest on the part of the pro, then conclude your exchange with the appropriate thanks, and release the poor individual to continue their socializing. Many pros have trouble excusing themselves, and don't want to appear rude. Cut them some slack. Their gratitude will be evident when they look forward to talking with you next time around.
- Keep it brief. Although you may be excited and delighted by the chance to have a friendly conversation with an individual who has until now seemed "out of reach," keep in mind that they are at this social event for the same reasons you are. They want to socialize, talk business with editors and publishers, and meet other people. For many professionals living scattered around the country, a convention is often the only opportunity they have to socialize with their peers. So if you get the chance to talk, keep it brief. Be friendly, but don't tie them up for long periods of time. If they seem receptive, set a time to meet again - maybe over a meal or a drink - and let them get on to their 'schmoozing' while you continue with yours. I guarantee they'll be grateful, and will remember you in a most positive light when next you meet.
- If an opportunity to talk with a good contact or a potential employer presents itself, take it in a friendly, but businesslike manner. Introduce yourself (your first *and* last name), comment on your interest in that individual, and use some of your icebreaker questions and/or comments.

When you deem it the appropriate time to depart, offer them your business card, shake hands, and express your pleasure with meeting them and how you look forward to talking again. By following this very simple strategy, you will have left the individual with the impression that you are friendly, businesslike, enthusiastic, and considerate. And you will have primed them for another meeting - hopefully sometime later at the convention. This will provide you with fertile grounds in which to plant the seed of your possible employment.

- Follow through. This is imperative advice to follow, whether you are socializing, meeting at the convention, or corresponding. Do not expect the individual you contact to follow through for you. The responsibility is yours. You're the one looking for work, and you'll be the one hanging over the phone like a jilted date. Don't sit around waiting anxiously. If you feel you've made a good contact, then follow through while you are still fresh in their mind. If you've talked at an evening social event, then stop by during the next convention day to talk again, briefly. If your contact expresses interest in seeing your work, then visit with them at their earliest convenience during the convention. However you do it, just remember to *follow through*. Even established pros realize the importance of following through.

Keep in mind that publishers and editors are often doing the work of more than one person. They have little in the way of free time, and no matter how wonderful an impression you've made, it is a courtesy to them to help out in your business relationship by following through. This frees them of the responsibility of trying to remember everyone they've talked to and every little thing they said. They will appreciate your consideration, and by following through you display your professionalism and interest.

Using Feedback

Ultimately, whether it comes from an established creator, or whether it's imparted by a potential employer, you will get comments on your work. They may be accompanied by queries about your availability for work - in which case, plan to celebrate - or they may be the precursors to comments like "I see you have a way to go. Keep working on it, and check back with me next year." Or worse. Whatever is said, there are many ways you can react to this feedback. But the best thing you can do, is work with it.

If an editor or publisher advises that your work doesn't fit with their line, then concentrate on tailoring your samples more effectively to their requirements. If they suggest it lacks polish, or shows weaknesses in technical expertise, then get back to work. Practice, practice, practice. If a creator suggests new or better methods for approaching your work, try them out. If they indicate strengths, cultivate them, if they point out weaknesses, then work to eliminate them. But whatever you have to do, pay attention to the critique. Essentially, what that professional is telling you is that your work doesn't meet their standards at that time. In the case of the employer, it doesn't mean they won't hire you ever. It just means they don't feel you're ready to hire now.

Also, keep in mind that a large part of a critique is personal opinion. What one professional tells you can be the direct opposite of what another will say. It is a good idea to get a selection or variety of critiques, from both potential employers and potential creative peers. With this type of range, it will be easier for you to decide the validity of the critique comments. If the same comment comes up repeatedly with different pros, then you should consider that it's probably correct, despite your own feelings. Try adjusting your work accordingly, then have it critiqued again, and see what the response is.

Keep one thing in mind always; you are trying to secure work in a specific industry. Publishing is a business, so publishers tend to be attracted to marketable material and are generally conservative due to financial constraints. If your style is grossly divergent from what is considered acceptable in our wildly eclectic business, then you may have trouble getting work. That doesn't mean your work isn't valid as it stands. It simply means that there is nobody currently available or interested in publishing work so divergent from the norm. Perhaps someday you can get it published, but getting started often means making small compromises. Keep that in the back of your mind. Get yourself established, then if you feel ready, try shopping your more unusual

ProFiles

Professional: Mark Wheatley - Owner of Insight Studios, Writer, Artist, Production and Consulting

Credits Include: *Breathtaker*, DC Comics; creator/writer for *The Black Hood*, Impact; American coordinator for the *Taroon* project, Semic International

Current Projects: Writer, artist, production on a two-part *Batman: Legends Of The Dark Knight*, DC Comics

Question: How important a role do you feel conventions play for an aspiring professional and what advice would you give on attending?

In the comic industry, we have an international community, and conventions are the only time we can get together. I think it's vital to attend cons as early as possible, because that's when you make friends with the people who will eventually be your contemporaries working in the industry. The importance of the social aspect is usually overlooked. You see, even if *you* don't get work, friends might get jobs and you could eventually get work from, or through, them.

Plus, it's fun! It's important to realize that just because 'networking' might sound dishonest, the thing to keep in mind is that it's fun, and real. You're going to make friends.

My advice for when you know you're going to meet a pro at a convention, or any time you get to meet a professional, is to reread their work and read anything you can about them personally. This lets you familiarize yourself with their interests, and makes it easier to talk with them. Try to talk about something that you both can relate to. For example, paleontology is popular with pros in the comic industry. An old sales technique that works really well, is to start talking about something external – like the guy passing that just spilled his coffee - that sort of thing. It's a good place to open the conversation, takes the pressure off and will make it a lot easier to strike up a conversation.

Keep in mind that all the working professionals used to be aspiring pros, too. Try to remember pros aren't the unapproachable two-dimensional superhero comic characters like they work on, but real people with real families and real lives.

Finally, get involved. Help the people who put on the convention. Offer to help anywhere it's needed; the art show, registration - no job is too small. Remember, convention organizers tend to put on shows regularly. If you've been good to them, they'll be much kinder to you once you're an established professional.

Panels from Wheatley's upcoming ***Batman:Legends of the Dark Knight***.

stuff around again. It may be received more agreeably in the future, once you're an established name. For now, however, you just want to get your foot in the door, so listen and learn.

The Big Picture

Now you can see how it all ties together in this first step toward approaching potential employers. It is critical to remember the importance of **attending conventions**. When attending a convention, you will want to organize a strategy that includes **finding out the portfolio review times** and showing your work samples, getting **professional critiques** from attending creators, sitting in at **panel discussions** and checking out any **displays**. You will also want to take advantage of any specially scheduled **socializing** events such as cocktail parties, dinners, dances, or gatherings hosted byprofessionals that are open to both pros and convention attendees. Conventions present you with a variety of methods for meeting possible employers, including **introducing yourself** at both the convention and any related convention social events, **showing your portfolio** to publishers, editors and creators and **using feedback** from their critiques of your work to improve your chances of gaining work in the future.

Next month we'll look at **Approaching Potential Employers - Part 2**. This will cover the mail route; sending introductory letters and sample packages. Meanwhile, check out some industry publications such as Arena Magazine, The Comic Buyer's Guide, Comic Shop News and Wizard Magazine for listings of upcoming conventions. Plot your convention strategy, and get ready to continue down the road to *Getting Into The Business Of Comics*.

Glossary of Terms

con or **convention** - an event held by a local sponsor over one or more days, which features a display of industry-related material by retailers and publishers, guest creators, panel discussions and exhibits.

convention circuit - the regularly - and often annual - schedule of conventions. In the comic industry, the majority of conventions are held during the spring and summer. Therefore, the comic industry 'convention circuit' could be said to run from May through August.

critique - an assessment by an individual (can be from another creator, an editor, a publisher, or a fan) of the caliber and quality of your work. It should include comments about technical expertise, individual style and expression, dynamic qualities of the work, presentation and overall impression. Comments should be used to improve upon the work, and tailoring future work to publisher requirements.

networking or **schmoozing** - the popular name for the act of making business introductions and connections with potential employers during social activities. Often can take a friendlier, less-businesslike approach.

panel discussion - generally held during a convention, these feature a panel of 'authorities' on the topic of discussion. Topics range widely, and the panel duration can run anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour or more. They often provide a question and answer period for the audience.

portfolio - an organized display of samples of work, published and/or unpublished. Used to display your work to potential employers and other creators.

portfolio review - a time structured by publishers and editors for review of the sample portfolios of newcomers and aspiring professionals.

retailers - these are the business people who own and operate your local comic store. They are responsible for ordering the books that are purchased by the readers. Technically, they could also be considered your potential employers, because their orders determine which books sell well, and frequently shape the editorial choices of the publishers. At a convention, they are also called 'dealers'.

submissions guidelines - written rules provided by publishers to act as a guide for new talent submissions of artwork or writing. These guidelines stipulate the form and method that unsolicited submissions should take when turned in to that publisher. Aspiring pro's should strictly adhere to these guidelines for serious consideration of their work.

The Mailroom: Submissions Guidelines

Starting this month we will print the submissions guidelines for an individual publisher following the column. These will be published in no particular order. They will be the current guidelines, provided by the publisher or submissions editor. Use them as a strict guide when sending samples of work to the company.

This month we are featuring **DC Comics**. Their submissions guidelines were accompanied by the following note for interested writers:

"We'd like to thank all of you who have sent in your inquiries on submitting stories or new characters for DC Comics to publish. So many submissions have been pouring into our offices that we can't possibly give each of them the attention it deserves.

If you would like your submissions to get more than a cursory look, we suggest you hold off sending anything at the present time, until we can make a dent in our substantial backlog.

Again, than you for your interest and enthusiasm. We'll make an announcement when we are caught up and are again reviewing written submissions."

DC Comics Artists' Submissions Guidelines

How To Submit Art To DC Comics

Please send **COPIES** of your work (*never* send original art) along with a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) for a reply to: *Submissions Editor, DC Comics Inc., 1325 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019*. If you don't include a SASE, there's no guarantee you'll receive a reply. DC Comics is not responsible for the safety or return of any original material sent to us.

You'll receive an answer as soon as we evaluate your work. This may take several weeks. **DON'T PHONE** to discuss your submission. We receive dozens, often *hundreds* of submissions a week, and it's impossible for us to follow up on them over the phone.

You may send samples to a DC editor with whom you'd like to work. Some editors will look at work from new artists, but there's no guarantee you'll receive an answer from an editor whose main concern is getting out his or her books.

If your showing your samples to a DC editor at a convention, be sure your presentation is neat and that you follow these guidelines.

Focus your skills on one medium: *pencilling*, *inking*, *coloring*, or *lettering*. Bad inking may be misread as bad pencilling, and vice versa.

Pencils

Pencillers should submit 4-6 **COMIC BOOK PAGES** *in order*, showing the progression of a story through a series of pictures. Don't send pinups and paintings. They don't tell us you can tell a comics story.

You can make your own story sequence, visually advancing it from panel to panel and from page to page. Or you can work with a writer friend or rework an existing comics story (without copying the art). Your story should be easy to follow, moving along clearly and dynamically. It's better to draw well in traditional block panels than to try to impress us with sexy pin-ups, overly complex layouts or artistic gimmicks.

Your samples should also show basic drawing abilities. In addition to knowing how to draw heroic action figures and expressive faces, you must be able to draw the average guy on the street, **buildings, cars, animals, aliens - ANYTHING** you may find in a comic book. Your art should display an understanding of perspective and anatomy. You should be able to draw people in different types of clothing and in a variety of poses, from an old woman hunched in a chair to a muscular super-hero punching through a wall. It's best not to limit yourself only to comics as your reference and inspiration. Life-drawing and other general art classes and books are important parts of your education. The *dedicated artist* draws everything he sees, all the time.

Professional comics pencillers work in a 10" X 15" image area on a sheet of Strathmore bristol board that measures 11" X 17". They usually lay out their pages with a lead pencil or non-reproducing blue pencil, and finish their art with a regular pencil. Don't use too hard a pencil (3H or harder) or bear down too hard on the page. This will leave grooves in the paper.

Inks

Inkers should submit photocopies of both your inks *and* the pencils you have inked, so that wecan compare the two. We would prefer to see your inks over more than one penciller. If you have noaccess to pencil samples from a friend or professional, write DC's Submissions Editor for photocopies - but you *must* include a self-addressed 9" X 12" envelope with about one dollar in postage. Inking on vellum over the photocopies or on bristol board with a lightbox is probably the easiest way for

you to work.

A comic-book inker's job is to add **DEPTH** and **CLARITY** to the pencils without obscuring the penciller's work. This is done by spotting blacks and varying line weight to give the page variety and each panel a three-dimensional feel, *not* by adding unnecessary detail. Objects in the foreground must look and "weigh" differently from objects in the background. You must also know which pencil lines should be omitted in the inking. Storytelling is an important part of the inker's job, and knowing how to draw separates the best inkers from the rest.

Professional comics inkers use artists waterproof india ink, applied with a variety of brushes and pens. Corrections can be made by using one of several types of white paint. Remember, your ink line comes from your brain as much as from the tools you use.

Lettering

Comic-book letterers are responsible for captions, word and thought balloons, balloon shapes, panel borders, title lettering, credits and sound effects. Caption and balloon lettering have to be uniform and easy to read, with slight "breathing room" between letters, words and lines. Too tight letter spacing is hard to read. Story titles and sound effects are usually lettered in a bold, open style.

You can letter your samples onto full-size photocopies of pencilled pages (to secure copies of pencils, see the inking section above), or you may submit 3-4 pages of lettering without art, on 8 ½" X 11" paper. The first method is preferable, since it will show us how your lettering will look on an actual page. Show us *all* types of lettering, from word, thought, electric (jagged edge) and whisper (dotted line) balloons to sound effects.

Comic letterers use an **AMES LETTERING GUIDE** (set from 3 to 3½ on the bottom scale), available at many art supply stores, for spacing and guidelines, and one of a variety of pens - ranging from technical pens to fined-down calligraphy pens - for words. Balloons and ruled panel borders are usually done with a technical or ruling pen.

Coloring

Coloring is an essential part of comics storytelling. The colorist must interpret the art and tell the story through color, adding depth, dramatic effect, mood and most important, **CLARITY.**

The most important characters and objects in each scene and page must be clearly visible to the reader. This often requires coloring people and things differently than they would appear in real life. For example, if a panel features Guy Gardner standing amidst a crowd of dozens of people, Guy could be colored normally, while the others could be colored in a monotone (or a series of related muted tones) to ensure that Guy is clearly seen in the panel.

Colorists can create **MOOD** by taking further liberties with realism. For example, if an artist has drawn a sequence of panels in which Lobo gets angry, a variety of reds - a color often used to convey anger - could be used on both Lob himself and in the background. Blue and green, conversely, establish a placid feel.

Standard comics color guides are coded to match a chart of 124 colors available to us. marking up your guides is an essential part of coloring.

Colorists should submit 4-6 pages of fully colored and coded comic-art photocopies. Colorists work on reduced photocopies (art reduced 64% onto 8½" X 11" paper). If you need photocopies to color, or a copy of the DC coloring chart showing the available colors, send a self-addressed, stamped 9" X 12" envelope to DC's Submissions Editor with your request.

Professional comics colorists use **DR. MARTIN'S DYES,** although colored pencils or markers are also acceptable.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

1. *Always send photocopies - never send originals!*
2. *Include your name, address, and phone number on each page of your submission.*
3. *Always include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your submission, with enough postage for the return of your copies (if you want them back).*
4. *Please handle all submissions-related correspondence with DC through the mail. Don't call.*

If you have questions about the topics covered in this column, please feel free to write. I will try to address your questions in the column or by a personal note. Send your letters to **Lurene Haines, c/o Comics Arena Magazine, 264 Main St., Florence, KY 41042.**

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MARVEL'S HEAVY HITTER'S

What Does Marvel Have In Store?

by Dan Souder

Marvel Comics' Epic imprint is expanding its load and hitting hard this year so there's no term more apropos for these titles than *Heavy Hitters*! There are four titles coming out this April, and with names like Joe Kubert and Howard Chaykin filling in the lineup, you can be certain that they won't be a disappointment. Here's a rundown:

Joe Kubert's Tor. This title will validate the variety of it's *Heavy Hitter* line when *Joe Kubert's Tor* is released. Kubert is known for his legendary work on such titles as *Sgt. Rock, Hawkman,* and *Enemy Ace* and more recently, as being the sire of Adam (*Spirits Of Vengeance*) Kubert and Andy (*X-Men*) Kubert. Joe shows where his sons' talents stem from in this limited four part series that the senior Kubert wrote and illustrated. The *Tor* limited series will be a 32-page, magazine-sized, series printed on fine 'Fanfare' paper.

Joe Kubert's Tor tells the story of a noble, prehistoric hero who must safeguard himself from the dangers of the Stone Age. In the pioneer issue, Tor must save a woman from a prehistoric tribe who is determined to sacrifice her to a volcano. Tor not only has to defy the tribe, but also must keep an eye out for any of the dangerous monsters that rove this antediluvian domain.

Untamed. Neil Hansen, recognized for his work on *Icon Devil* under the pseudonym 'Spyder', brings his limited series, *Untamed*, to Epic's creator-owned line. Epic has made a strong commitment to action-adventure series, and *Untamed* fits the bill perfectly, telling the story of Griffin Palmer, a previous soldier and mercenary cop who captains the dreaded Supreme Attack Force. The Force's primary function is to destroy the vehement Kosansui, a splinter group of the feared Japanese criminal organization, the Yakuza. Griffin's existence grows eminently entangled when he is given a new partner, Dane Kuchiyama, an accomplished martial artist who just happened to operate for the Kosansui -- as a hit man! Hansen has produced a tale that is filled with hard-hitting action and has given us a character in Griffin who "makes Dirty Harry look like a pacifist."

The Trouble With Girls. Creators Gerard Jones and Will Jacobs are giving their critically venerated run, *The Trouble With Girls*, a 4 issue limited series. Jones and Jacobs will be penning

the series and Bret (*Ghost Rider*) Blevins will be providing the art.

The Trouble With Girls supervenes the ventures of super secret agent Lester Girls, as reluctant hero who should love to settle down, get married, and have kids – but instead is constantly embroiled in international intrigue. In this new series, Girls once again finds himself up to his eyeballs in deadly espionage, all the while trying to fend off the enticements of beautiful women.

Midnight Men. Howard Chaykin comes back to comics this spring with *Midnight Men*. Chaykin, known for his work on *American Flagg, Black Kiss,* and the *Blackhawk* limited series, as well as his scripting of film and television projects, will be both writing and illustrating the four part limited series.

Midnight Men, ingrained in the California mid 90's, tells the story of Barnett Pasternack, a rogue thief from New York City who travels west only to get involved with an order of vigilantes who have been fighting crime in the Los Angeles area since the 1850's. The mantle of the Midnight Man has been passed down from one generation to the next, and Barnett may just accidentally become the latest incarnation. Chaykin has crafted a story thick with the mystery, action and espionage that has become his mark.

So, there it is, Epic's Heavy Hitters for April all wrapped up in one ball of wax. Now, all that's left to do is to sit back with a bag of chips, a soda (don't forget a couple napkins; greasy chip fingers and comics don't mix well), and let the action-adventure unfold!

A Conversation With ... Tom Lyle

Interview by Jerry Smith

From his beginnings at Eclipse Comics' late, lamented superhero titles to his upcoming work at Marvel, Tom Lyle has grown from an unknown artist to a highly sought after fan-favorite. We caught up with Tom recently to discuss his work on the Robin books, his secret comic book fantasy, and on being a writer/artist.

Arena Magazine: *What did you just finish with at DC?*

Tom Lyle: I'm finishing up the *Robin III* miniseries. I should mention that, unfortunately, I'm only doing the thumbnail breakdowns on the last issue because I got real behind because my wife was in the hospital, like, late summer, and I just got behind on the whole thing.

Arena: *Everything okay with her now?*

Lyle: Yes, she's doing real well, thanks. I'm disappointed that I'm only doing the thumbnails, but a least I had something to do with the whole thing.

Arena: *Who's finishing the artwork?*

Lyle: To be honest, I don't know yet. [Grant Miehm ended up doing the pencils. -Ed.] They wanted to have Scott Harms do it, because he draws sort of like me and we are a good match ink and pencil-wise, but he is unavailable because he has so much inking to do. As soon as I finish *Robin*, my commitment with DC is pretty much finished up right now and I'm going to start doing some work for Marvel. The first thing I will be doing is the *Amazing Spider-Man Annual*, which will come out I think in March. Then April, May and June will be my three issues coming out of a big *Spider-Man* crossover. I'll be doing the three issues of the adjectiveless *Spider-Man* book. I think it's 35, 36, and 37... or 36, 37, and 38, I can't remember for sure. It's a fourteen-part crossover with Carnage as the main villain and a lot of guest stars. It works out pretty good, we had a big plot conference and worked out the whole thing. It involves all the *Spider-Man* titles and including the new *Spider-Man* title. They don't call it quarterly, what are they calling it... ?

Arena: *There's another Spider-Man title?*

Lyle: There's going to be a new *Spider-Man* title, it will be a quarterly book. [*Spider-Man Unlimited* -Ed.]. Then after I'm finished doing that, I'm doing a *Spider-Man/X-Factor* prestige book, which I'm really looking forward to, which Kurt Busiek will be writing. After that, I go to the Venom and Punisher miniseries, which is actually a *Venom* miniseries guest starring the Punisher.

Arena: *Don't you find it kind of odd that these two particular characters get together, or is that why it works?*

Lyle: It does seem really weird, but they're making Venom into a more ... he's almost like an anti-hero now instead of a villain. So he's kind of like the Punisher in that he's a bit misguided, but he's trying to do good.

Arena: *[Venom] getting his own series, isn't he?*

Lyle: Actually, it's an ongoing series of miniseries. [Mark] Bagley's doing a six issue miniseries I think, and after that there's going to be a Venom/Ghost Rider team-up, which they offered me, but timing-wise I couldn't do it. So I took the Punisher one, which was the third miniseries.

Arena: *How did you line up so much work at Marvel at one time? Is that usual?*

Lyle: Danny Fingeroth has been trying to get me to come to Marvel for three years. I got offered *New Warriors* and turned it down because I couldn't do it. I got offered *Dark Hawk* and turned it down because I couldn't do it. That was like two separate years in a row. Now this is the third year and now he's got me. So when I told him I was coming up, he lined up a whole ton of stuff for me to do, and said, "Here, I want you to work for me!" I even got offers from Don Daley for a *Punisher War Zone* which he unfortunately wanted right away. He would have teamed Chuck Dixon and I up again. I told him I'd still like to do it, I know the Punisher books are still going to be there so I'll just wait. Marvel was real receptive. I walked in the door, and they were throwing work at me. I was like, this is nice.

Arena: *How do you like working for DC as opposed to working for Marvel, what are the strengths and weaknesses of both? Or is there any difference?*

Lyle: In terms of the corporate, the actual working enviroment, both of them are very nice. The only problem I have with working with DC is that as much as I like Robin and as much as I have tried to pour into Robin, they have a limited fan base. Unfortunately, I can't seem to break past a certain amount of people. As popular as Robin has been, there are tons of fans who don't know who the heck I am. I have people ask, "What do you draw?" "Robin". "Oh, I don't read DC." I'm hoping that by working for Marvel, I can expand my base. Then, if I want to do something for DC again, or Image, or Dark Horse, or anybody, I can take that base with me and be a little more broad-based and popular.

Arena: *Your style is sort of unusual. There really aren't big huge muscular hunks, as in Jim Lee's art, running around your work. This is not a derogatory comment by any means; your layout is excellent. How do you think that positions you as far your talents in the market? Do you think you could draw any book? Do you feel confident drawing certain characters and not others because of your style?*

Lyle: I can draw just about anybody, I think. I'm more comfortable drawing the more realistically sized people, like Batman. Batman is a big guy, but he's not like the steroid cases we see in some of the things.

Arena: *(Laughter) Even though he's drawn that way sometimes.*

Lyle: Some people draw him really, really big. But I also will say that while I would be willing and am going to draw a team in the *Spider-Man/X-Factor* thing, I feel more comfortable drawing a singular/ duo character book, because I'm just more fond of them for some reason. My secret fantasy is to write and draw *Daredevil*. I would kill to get on that book. I love that character, I know that character inside and out.

Arena: *So you want to write?*

Lyle: I tried it with *The Comet*, but they only let me plot and didn't let me script on the Impact line, and I managed to escape with my skin intact, tail between my legs, and decided I'm going to wait till whatever. I did let Danny Fingeroth know that I'm interested in it. I told him that I wanted to get comfortable with working at Marvel and with the Marvel characters again, because, to be honest, there are too many comics out now to follow, so I have not followed a lot of the books. I've got to find out what is going on and get comfortable with it again before I start wanting to pitch ideas. I think that within a year I'm going to start really trying to work on getting in as a writer/ artist again.

This interview was conducted in November, 1992.

Malibu's Ultraverse

Genesis Of A Brave, New World

Mailibu's *Prime* by Norm Breyfogle.

By Joe Martin

Malibu Comics has had some year. A year that included acquiring *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, producing two video game titles based on their comics, publishing the enormously successful Image Comics line and securing, among all things, a merger with a video game designer that produces cartridges for companies such as Sega and Sony and entitled, appropriately enough, Malibu Interactive. How can they possibly top it?

By going one better.

Huh? What? Welcome to the Ultraverse, the "future of full color super-hero comics!" Chris Ullm, Malibu's Ultra-Editor, had a dream for several years and to bring it to fruition, he gathered together some of the top creators in the field in one small room somewhere in Scotsdale, AZ; Mike W. Barr, Steve Englehart, Steve Gerber, James Hudnall, Gerard Jones, and Len Strazewski along with Hugo and Nebula award-winning science fiction author Larry Niven and, together, this massive conglomerate of superegos established (with help from Malibu's crack editorial staff) a basis for the Ultraverse with a timeline traversing millions of years, thorough backstory details and most significantly, hundreds of impelling characters. "The ultimate playground of the mind," as Chris called it, each one of these projects is an integral building block in a larger story--the Ultraverse. It's a tale of teamwork, of creative vision, of editorial substance, of financial commitment.

And that last part, financial commitment, Malibu has more than proven when they flew out and took in several dozen comics distributor and media persons for their Malibu Ultra-Conference this past February. It was a successful weekend of hype and unveiling with the

occasional wining and dining all on Malibu's expense account, with a little aid from Skybox, who will be producing the Ultraverse card set. But enough about money, let's talk about the Ultraverse.

The Ultraverse line of titles was created around a simple idea: put the story first. Each Ultraverse comic features characters that you care about with plots that are involving and crossover appearances that are internally consistent with each of the other titles. Publisher Dave Olbrich stated that it was, "an entirely cohesive universe and a great team effort," and went on to add, "each script is turned in so that everyone sees it and are up-to-date with what's going on in each of the other titles." In short, the Ultraverse is a universe that was created from the ground up to make sense. These are not marketing gimmicks but characters that you can believe in.

Superior script-work is only one role of the Ultraverse intrigue. Like motion pictures, comics are a visual medium which requires the talents of gifted artists to bring the concepts to life. And the Ultraverse delivers on that score as well! With the specialties of such notables as Norm Breyfogle, Brett Blevins, Dave Gibbons, Adam Hughes, Kevin Nowlan, Darick Robertson, and Walt Simonson, the Ultraverse is on a very firm artistic footing, indeed.

In today's competitive environment, excellent stories and illustrious art alone are still not enough: the projects must ship on time, be well promoted and feature tie-in products with other media. Malibu has a well-earned reputation for on-time shipping and their promotion for the Ultraverse speaks for itself. As for tie-in projects, expect a *Prime* video game developed by Malibu Interactive, a *Hardcase* film short and, as stated before, a line of *Ultraverse* trading cards from Skybox and representation to the film community by the Hollywood super-agency ICM. Expect to see the Ultraverse characters you see here in a variety of other mediums and languages worldwide.

Hardcase by Dave Gibbons.

More about Malibu Interactive, you say? Briefly, it is spearheaded by Bob Jacob who has "been in the electronic games business for 10 years." Previously called Acme Interactive and having developed such titles as *Evander Holyfield Boxing* (Sega/ Genesis) and *David Robinson Basketball* (Sega/ Genesis), Jacob led the development of two games which heralded his company's future: *Batman Returns!* (Sega/ Genesis) and *Ex-Mutants* (Sega/ Genesis). The latter made solid the long-time relationship between Jacob and Malibu's Scott Rosenberg. In August 1992, Malibu and Acme Interactive merged, with Rosenberg and Jacob as co-owners. As Jacob commented, "there is a synergy between comics and video games. They go hand-in-hand. I call it a popcultural phenomenon, marrying technology with comic art." Jacob is looking forward to developing Ultraverse video games for Sega.

"The name of the game is teamwork," says Ullm. "Everyone's in the same boat." Sink or swim? The teamwork

The Strangers by Rick Hoberg: (L to R) Zip Zap, Electrocute, Spectral, Atom Bob, Grenade, Yrial, Lady Killer.

Freex by Walter Simonson.

between the writers, artists, editors, and the staff of Malibu have made the Ultraverse a reality. And that same teamwork will ensure that high quality comics make it to your local store month after month!

A two-hundred page (and growing!) story "bible", as they are calling it, with new Ultraverse developments is continually updated and distributed to every member of each creative team. State-of-the-art computer conferencing keeps each book's creative team in touch with Malibu and each other. Story conferences and informal "get togethers" are regularly scheduled for the Ultraverse team. Most importantly, each creator shares in publishing and merchandising revenue for the characters they create -- forever. Thus, the hardworking creative people responsible for making these books succeed have both financial and creative incentives to produce their best work for the Ultraverse. There is no "holding back" or "saving the best for later".

Ultimately, however, the success of the Ultraverse is in YOUR hands. Having seen what Malibu has to offer, I can only speculate. I was impressed and I told Rosenberg that this initial move was most certainly a right one. They've got the writers, they've got the artists -- now, they need the readers.

by R.G. Roadcup

Welcome to a brand new feature in *Arena Magazine*, the "Top O' My Head" column. I'm a professional in the Cincinnati-area media, and as such, I'm acutely aware of the events that effect our world and our little comic book hobby. In this and future columns, I'll be adding my two cents worth to popular opinion on comics, television, movies, books, and the world in general. Hopefully these thoughts will provoke thought and discussion, bringing tolerance and understanding that bring us all closer together. Or, maybe I'll just tick a lot of people off. If you'd like to share in the fun, please write me, R.G. Roadcup, c/o Top O' My Head, *Arena Magazine*, 264 Main Street, Florence, KY 41042. Please specify if you would not like your name mentioned. Remember, these are just opinions. Don't try this at home.

NEXT GENERATION OR DEEP SPACE NINE--WHICH IS WORSE? ... I thought no television show could ever get worse than *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Boy, is my face red. *ST:TNG* is boring, stagnant, and unbelievably dull. As comic book writer and Star Trek novelist Peter David recently pointed out, most episodes are a waste of Patrick Stewart's time and talent.

Imagine my surprise when a TV show worse than *ST:TNG* hit the airwaves, and that show is none other than another *Star Trek* inspired show! Yes, the yawnfest *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. The only thing this has in common with the classic '60s series is the words "Star Trek" in the title. Isn't the idea of ST to explore new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations? Kind of tough to do that stuck on a big asteroid, isn't it?

I thought *Star Trek: The Next Generation* would fix some of the original *ST's* mistakes; the embarrassingly trite shows, the lack of continuity, etc. Instead, show's powers-that-be learned nothing from twenty years of ensemble television shows. They made *ST:TNG* the dullest TV show in history.

This points out how stupid I was to think that the same producers would make *Deep Space Nine* any better. The *ST* shows keep getting worse, not better. I thought *ST:TNG* was boring. Little did I know what *ST:DSN* had in store. I have three words for the writers and producers of *Deep Space Nine*: Boring. Boring. Boring. If these guys want to fill the show with hours of endless intellectual drivel (like the pilot episode of *Deep Space Nine*), fine. But there are other ways to write. You know, like something to keep viewers interested in the show. Have the *ST* writers for both new shows ever heard of, say ... HUMOR? Or ACTION? Or CHARACTERIZATION? Nahhhhhhh ... that would get in the way of all this boring philosophical stuff.

The original *Star Trek* was a success not only because of its positive view of the future, but also because of strong characters and a good balance of humor and action. The two new *ST* shows have neither humor nor action. They just push this "perfect future" philosophy down our throats for an hour a week, while bland, perfect crews ride around in ships or are stuck on space asteroids. And how do fans react to these atrocities? Everyone is ashamed not the like them. The prevailing fan sentiment is, "Well some *Star Trek* is better than no *Star Trek*, right?" Wrong.

Sue me for being different, but I insist on quality. I want captains that James Kirk wouldn't pound into the ground after a few minutes of listening to their potically correct whining. Captains who are not afraid to make decisions and take charge. I want crews that are interesting in their own right. I want a balance of action and humor (neither *TNG* or *DSN* show any signs of a sense of humor. Are we all going to be totally serious in the future?) I want Vulcans! The new series are ignoring one of the most interesting cultures ever invented in fiction. Come to think of it, maybe I don't want Vulcans. The new *ST* shows have ruined every alien culture in the *ST* canon, from the Klingons to the Romulans. If the Vulcans ever appeared on a regular basis, they'd probably have a horn or some other stupid plastic device attached to their forehead. For some reason, *ST* producers think gluing plastic appliances to people's heads and noses qualify them as aliens. If Vulcans made an impactful return, they'd no doubt have tree branches stuck to the top of their heads to distinguish them as "aliens". I still haven't figured out why the new Klingons have lobsters stuck to their forheads. Is it some kind of symbiotic relationship?

Call me bullish if you will, but *The Next Generation* and *Deep Space Nine* are not the legacy of *Star Trek*. I'm still waiting on a strong captain, a likable crew, and a series full of exciting, humorous, action-filled scripts. I wish they'd just put me in charge.

CHEERFULLY SUBMITTED ... Anyone care to guess what the hour-long series finale to *Cheers* will be about? A friend suggested, in my mind, the perfect ending. Sam and Rebecca decide they are in love (since

neither can seem to find anyone else) and arrange to be married in *Cheers* (how better to guarantee all of your close friends will be at your wedding than to take the wedding to them?). As the vows are about to be finalized, Diane Chambers (Shelley Long) bursts through the door and claims Sam as her own. Sam and Diane tie the knot and live happily ever after. Remember, Shelley Long is scheduled for a guest appearance in the final episode. Hey, you heard it here first.

HEY, LET'S PUT ON ANOTHER SUPERMAN SHOW ... According to a January article in USA Today, there will be a new Superman television show on next fall called The *Adventures of Clark and Lois*. The article stated that the series would focus on the Lois Lane/Clark Kent relationship, giving it a *Moonlighting*-type feel. Great, as long as Clark doesn't go around wearing funny sunglasses and singing Motown toons all the time. I just hope it isn't as cheesy as *Superboy*. Did Lana Lang get kidnapped in every episode of *Superboy*, or was that just my imagination?

SUGGESTED READING FOR THIS MONTH ... *The Firm*, by John Grisham, Card Sharks, edited by George R.R. Martin, *Night Over Water*, by Ken Follet, and *Blood List*, by P.N. Elrod.

"C'MON PLAY SERIOUS"..
IT SAYS HERE THAT WE NEED A TEN SIDED DIE, A TWELVE SIDED DIE, AND AN EIGHT SIDED DIE.
SO I GUESS JUST USING THE DICE OUT OF THE MONOPOLY GAME IS OUT OF THE QUESTION?!
J.L. 1993

AN EDITORIAL INTERLUDE...

UNFORTUNATELY, there seems to be very little flow of Gaming News out there and we've been having a difficult time of finding any. Thus, and therefore, we do not have a Gaming News section this month and it looks like that part of our magazine may be a dying breed. We apologize if you're miffed. It was not our intention, believe me. A BIG HOWEVER... we will continue to offer other gaming info or articles as they come. Take the Brom chat on the following page and John Larter's cartoon above. These things will continue when they come to us. ONWARD!

A Conversation With ... Brom

Interview by Joe Martin

Brom does a multitude of illustrations and paintings for TSR, the world's largest gaming manufacturer, and I caught up with him one day to see exactly who he is and why he does it.

Joe Martin: *Why the name Brom?*

Brom: Because I was born with it [laughs]. Actually it's my last name. I grew up an Army brat and all the kids use to call each other by their last names. Brom kind of stuck from the beginning and I've just always been called that. My first name is Gerald and it just never seemed to fit me.

JM: *Growing up, was it the fantasy art that you really got into?*

Brom: Fantasy and comics always did it for me. I had an older brother who got all the Burroughs novels with the Frazetta covers. That pretty much put me on the road.

JM: *That's cool. What's your favorite color?*

Brom: I would say .. monochromatic.

JM: *[Laughter] How many paintings have you done so far?*

Brom: For TSR, probably about 45 or so.

JM: *And that's novels, modules, box covers...*

Brom: Yeah. Before I came to TSR I did some commercial art work and a little bit of comic work for First Comics called *The Twilight Man*. Obviously it didn't go anywhere because nobody's heard of it but it was a fun little project. They're not worth looking up.

JM: *As a rule of thumb, most of the time your first project is your most embarassing.*

Brom: Everyone has their occasional bomb, I guess [laughs].

JM: *Now, you're the primary artist on all TSR's Dark Sun stuff, right?*

Brom: Yeah. TSR wanted to try something a little different with this world and just have one guy writing the novels and one guy doing the artwork. When I came on, some of my paintings just happened to look like what they wanted and they didn't have everything even created yet. They told me, "Look, we're going to go on and get these books done and you're welcome to create the creatures." So, that was fun. It was a unique position for an illustrator because I had full reign and was able to just go wild! *Dark Sun* was right up my alley and I really like the world because its lots of muscle-bulging monsters and barbarians and I really like flesh and there's lots of that.

JM: *Excellent. Lots of flesh. TSR likes keeping one primary artist on their projects such as [Larry] Elmore on Dragonlance.*

Brom: Yeah, he was doing that and Clyde, who's no longer here, was doing *Ravenloft*.

JM: *Why did he leave?*

Brom: He was fired. Actually he was looking to leave anyway and TSR just sort of "helped" him along.

JM: *Okay. How'd you get hooked up with TSR?*

Brom: Well, it's kind of an indentured servitude kind of thing. My forefathers came across from England there and were forced to work here.

JM: *So, you've literally been "chained to the drawing board."*

Brom: Exactly. Actually they were looking for an artist so I begged an interview out of them and flew out here. They were so taken with my dynamic personality that, uh [laughs], they just couldn't help but hire me.

JM: *So, are all those guys sitting around there laughing?*

Brom: Yeah, they're laughing and Rob's coughing, I think. I'll take care of them after I get off the phone.

JM: *[Laughter, we did this a lot] Are you a gamer?*

Brom: Well, I played once. It was a real blast but apparently my wife and my other companions tied me to a log and sent me over a waterfall. I wasn't playing right. I attacked a good wizard when I wasn't supposed to and that made me very unpopular!

JM: *I can picture your guy tied to a log, "Hey, guys, I was just kidding!"*

Brom: Yeah! I attacked the good wizard that was helping us. I hit him from behind with a stick so they decided that the company would be better off without me so they sent me over the falls and I died. My dice roll did not save me.

JM: *Do you have a favorite character?*

Brom: Neeva. She's something I did at home on my own and they loved the painting so much that they wrote a whole character around it. That painting is partly responsible for me getting the job. So, I kind of have a personal attachment to her, if you will. I'm very partial to her and feel like she's mine even though some of the things they've done with her in the novels... last I heard she was impregnated by a dwarf and I had a fit! My Neeva would never do that! I lost control.

JM: *Who are these crazy writers?*

Brom: Yeah, I tell ya'.

JM: A weird question... is there anything about yourself that a person who has first met you might find odd?

Brom: Hmm... I've got these huge boils all over my face that drip constantly. That's a real eye-opener for people in the beginning.

JM: Do people get turned off by that or do they tend to kind of roll with it?

Brom: Well, I find that people want to lance them all the time.

JM: [Boisterous laughter]

Brom: [*Boisterous laughter, also*]

JM: Do you like working in a studio atmosphere?

Brom: Yeah, I do. When you freelance you're kind of shut up away from people like a hermit but in a studio you have a chance to learn and to play off one another. A lot of strategy goes into what kind of practical joke you can pull and how much you can annoy and hinder each other.

JM: Sort of like school.

Brom: Just like school! Exactly.

JM: I imagine it is sort of educating, too.

Brom: Yeah, you really can learn a lot by bouncing things off of one another. When I first came here I really hadn't painted much with oil so I picked up a lot from these guys. It definitely helps. I totally prefer it over freelancing.

JM: Very good. Have any pets?

Brom: I have two black cats and a human child.

JM: A human child?! How bizarre! That's rare these days.

Brom: Isn't it, though? He's as bad as the cats. We've got a little litter box for him. We have to put him out at night.

JM: Isn't it strange how after cats "go" they always cover it up?

Brom: Yeah, now if we could just get the child to do that.

TALISLANTA

by Anthony Ragan

"I wanted to give gamemasters and players the most fully-realized setting ever created for a fantasy role-play game," says Steven Michael Sechi of his decision to co-write a third edition of his game, Talislanta. (*Wizards of the Coast*, 1992. $25.00) "I wanted a world filled with unusual races, creatures and cultures, so that gamers would have plenty to explore and discover."

"Plenty to explore" is an understatement. Co-designer Jonathan Tweet, well-known himself for his innovative work on *Ars Magica* and *Over the Edge*. describes Sechi's creation as a "brilliant and exciting world." *Talislanta* is set on a vast continent of the same name, one of many on the world of Archeus. The 300 page Guidebook describes over 20 fields of magic, 51 lands, 100 character types, and 150 creatures. From Aeromancy to Wizardry, from the haunted Werewood in the West to the decadent Quan Empire in the East, and from the dreaded Banes lo the ferocious Tarkus, players can adventure for years without ever exhausting Talislanta's possibilities. And this whole complicated scheme is held together by a simple set of rules that covers everything witbout ever getting in the way.

Talislanta is not a typical fantasy game world, most of which are variants of medieval Europe or *J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth*. Sechi wanted something other than the traditional European mythos, something other than the usual collection of Elves, Dwarves, and Humans. This something he culled and synthesized from a variety of sources.

"About twelve years ago, I was into shamanistic practices," says Sechi. "I was able to conjure vivid dreams of a place I called Talislanta. In the morning I would wake up, take a shower, and write down what I had seen the previous night." He also credits the colorful fantasies of Jack Vance, Lord Dunsany, and the "Tales of a Thousand and One Nights" as his main literary inspirations. Among older games he cites David A. Hargrave's *Arduin Grimoire* and M.A.R. Barker's *Empire of the Petal Throne*, both well-known among experienced gamers for their originality.

Talislanta's inhabitants are likewise originals. There are the dual-brained Sindarans, who can carry on two separate conversations at once; Bodor musicians, who can see sound as well as hear it; and the Phantasian dream merchants, who sail the skies in their rickety windships. Almost all the sentient species

cians, who can see sound as well as hear it; and the Phantasian dream merchants, who sail the skies in their rickety windships. Almost all the sentient species of *Talislanta* are available for players to choose from, providing a selection of character types nearly unheard-of in gaming.

A fantasy game by definition includes magic, and fans of magic will not be disappointed by *Talislanta*. One of the designer's goals while writing the new edition was to expand the magic system, to provide players and gamemasters with more variety. While many of the spells have similar effects, they are written in such a way that each spellcaster performs his wonders in a different and colorful fashion. Rahastran Cartomancers divine the future using the mystic Zodar deck, Crystallomancers use the inherent powers of gems to heal and harm, and Enchanters create the many magical items that characters can use or find as treasure. It is a world of spirits, the walking dead, and dangerous beings from other planes, all of whom are susceptible to the player's magic.

More mundane creatures lurk here as well, though they are hardly ordinary. Talislanta's wilderness contains some of the most gruesome monsters ever seen in a role-play game, most-closely resembling nightmare versions of insects and deep-sea fish. "I've never had nightmares, but I've always loved monsters of all types and have been inspired by everything from bizarre sci-fi films to H.P. Lovecraft. It was my goal to make the flora and fauna of Talislanta as weird and frightening as possible."

Sechi may well have succeeded at this. In a bestiary that matches the creative level of the game, the reader will find the dread Raknid, a "sorcerous hybrid of demon and scorpion;" the immense Monoliths, living mountains nearly "as old as the world itself;" and the bat-winged Fantasms, creatures that come from the Nightmare Plane to haunt a sleeper's dreams. Within the Guidebook are dozens of creatures and plants, some helpful and some deadly, but all guaranteed to give the players and gamemasters a good time.

A complicated game world es not mean that this is a complicated game, however. Talislanta may well be unique for its marriage of a simple game system to a deeply developed setting. Players resolve most task by the roll of single 20-sided dice, modified by the character's ability with whatever skills are appropriate to the situation. "My goal was to clarify and polish the rules where they were rough and to generally keep them from getting in the way of the setting," says Tweet, who did most of the work on the third edition's rules. Sechi has high praise for his co-designer's efforts, "He was the perfect collaborator. He combined creativity with an ability to capture the basic feel of both the rules and the milieu. I think he did a great job."

Central to the atmosphere and reputation of Talislanta is the quality artwork that accompanies it. With the aid of fantasy artists P.D. Breeding-Black and Ron Spencer, Sechi feels that the ideas of the game have been captured in a gripping manner. "I knew she (Breeding-Black) was the artist I wanted," he says. "We sent sketches back and forth for a couple of months until we got what we wanted -- a distinct visual style for Talislanta" Spencer has brought many of the stranger and darker elements to life, complementing the illustrations Breeding-Black had done for the earlier editions. "When I saw his samples, I flipped," enthused Sechi.

The original *Guidebook* is not the end of *Talislanta*. Wizards of the Coast, the issuer of the third edition, plans to support the game with further releases that expand and deepen the millieu. There are already several supplementary products on the market. *The Scent of the Beast* is the first in a series of prepackaged adventures written by Jonathan Tweet. *Tales of Talislanta* is a collection of short stories set in the game's world. And the *Archaen Codex* explains more of the world's history while also describing various wonders players may encounter in the course of high-powered campaigns.

According to Peter D. Adkison, President of Wizards of the Coast, there are even more projects under way. There will be a sequel to *Scent of the Beast* and an adventure set in the decadent Quan Empire, *Quantrigue*. Monster fans can look forward to a supplementary bestiary, *Thystram's Collectanea*, and an encyclopedic guide to the continent called the *Talislanta Omnibus*. And that isn't all. "I'd like to see graphic novels, novels, and computer games," says Sechi about Talislanta's future. "I think the setting has a lot of potential."

It certainly does and, as a last note of interest, Sechi is adapting his Talislanta to the world of comic books. Sometime this summer be on the lookout for *Talislanta: Rune* from Sky Comics. Illustrated by Ron Spencer and written by Sechi, it's the story of a Xambrian Wizard-Hunter and his quest to destroy an evil that had persecuted his ancestors long generations ago. If all goes well, Sechi and Sky Comics plan to publish more Talislanta comics.

Good reading!

..... END

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